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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

WORKSHOP

KYLO REN VS REY!

Paint this expanded
cover in Photoshop

INTERVIEW

AARON MCBRIDE

The Star Wars art
director reveals all

ART & ADVICE

IAIN MCCAIG SHARES
HIS FILM SKETCHES

CREATE A BOOK
COVER IN 2D & 3D

FENG ZHU PAINTS
A GALACTIC SCENE

"The Force is like
your artistic
talent, it needs
to be trained
and challenged"


Andrew Theophilopoulos

THE ART OF STAR WARS

Find out what it takes to create
art worthy of the new trilogy

Future

IT'S MAGIC! TERESE NIELSEN ON PAINTING 225 PIECES OF FANTASY CARD ART



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Welcome... to a double whammy!



Every great space opera franchise called Star Wars has a classic feud. That's just fact! And in anticipation of *The Force Awakens*, we've put it all on the line and printed a 'split run' (media jive for 'two covers' – I know, we're idiots), featuring our best guess at who the two new feuding characters will be: the potential young padawan Rey and the possible Sith badass Kylo Ren who, quite frankly, we're just hoping isn't Yoda dressed

up on stilts playing a prank on everyone... actually that would be pretty sweet. But I digress.

After his fine *Game of Thrones* workshop from issue 125, it was Andrew Theophilopoulos who came to mind for these two covers. I had a good idea of what it should look like, so sent him a stockpile of photo references of me in my pants, depicting the exact dynamic stance each character should hold. Like any professional, Andrew thanked me, set fire to his computer, washed his eyes with industrial-strength soap and, after some intense therapy, started work on his own photo shoot... Whatever. He's the artist, I guess.

The result (page 62) makes for two amazing covers. Its quality is also befitting an issue that boasts exclusive interviews with film art director Aaron McBride (page 40), card art connoisseur Terese Nielsen (page 46), as well as the specially extended sketchbook of Mr Film Art himself, Iain McCaig (page 54). Have a root around, and if you feel the need for any reference photos, ping me an email!

Beren

Beren Neale, Acting Editor
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Claire Howlett is on maternity leave.

*Our special cover for
subscribers this issue.*



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Reader FXPosé

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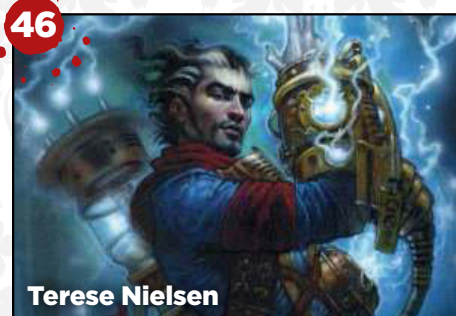
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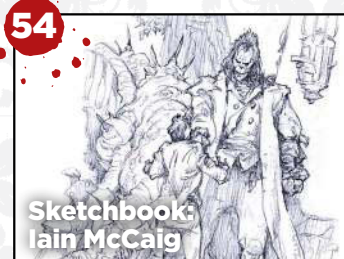
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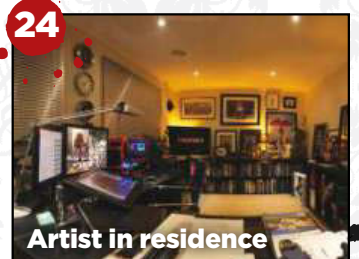
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Turn over the page for this issue's art assets



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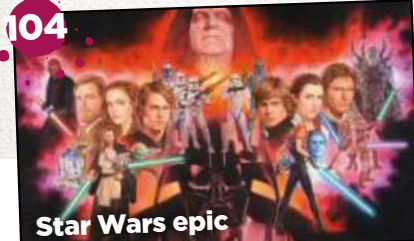
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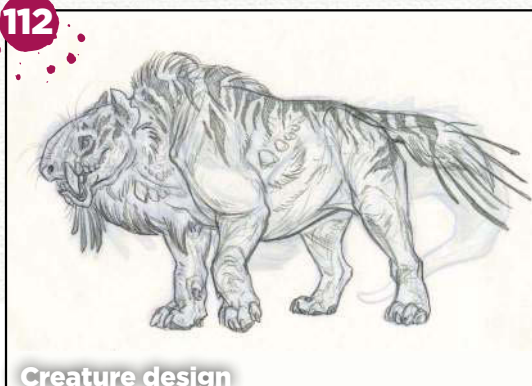
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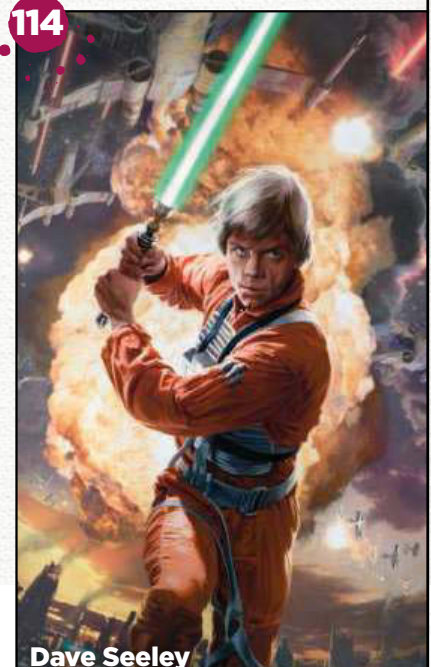
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Film poster skills



Creature design



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Resources

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/force129powers>

OVER 3 HOURS
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

From photo to finished art

Andrew Theophilopoulos uses photographs of models in costume to paint dynamic Star Wars imagery.



GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

- 1 Go to the website**
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/force129powers>
- 2 Find the files you want**
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

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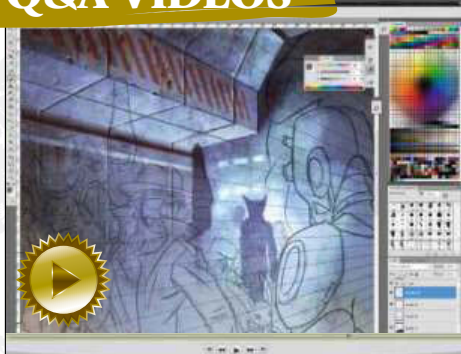




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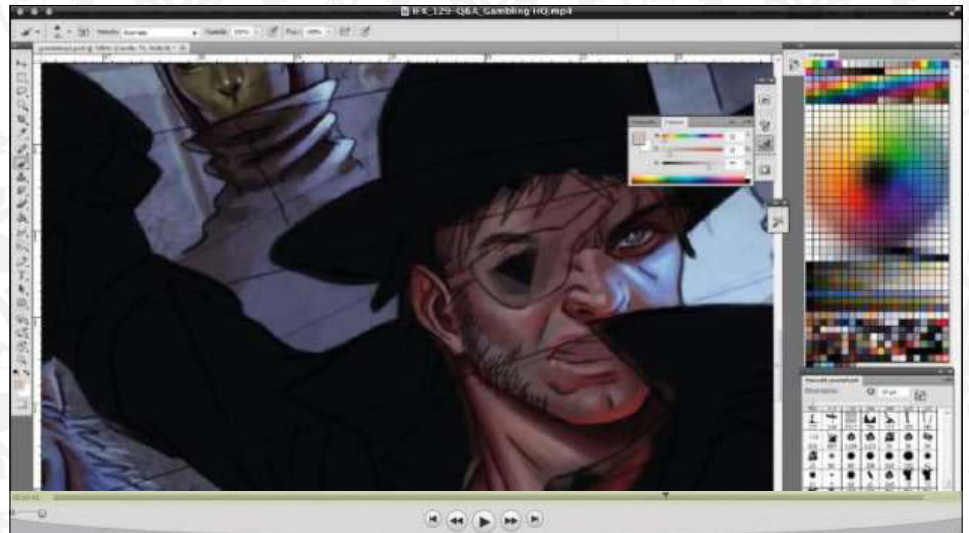
Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

Q&A VIDEOS



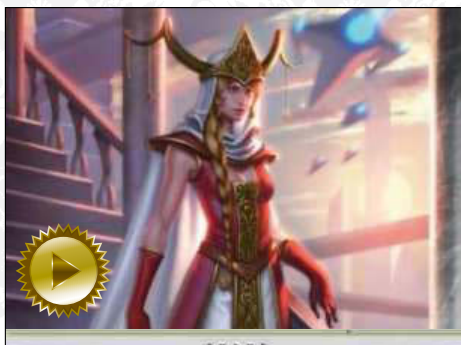
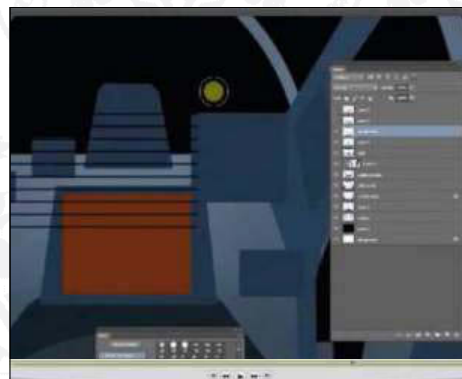
Sara Forlenza

Study casinos and the Wild West to create a seedy Star Wars gambling den. Plus WIPs and final image



Tony Foti

Understand the Star Wars films and their key aesthetic differences, and use lighting to dictate focus, in order to design and paint a cockpit for a small spaceship. Plus WIPs and final image



Sara Forlenza

Take inspiration from history to paint clothing on a regal Star Wars figure. Plus WIPs and final image



Cameron Scott Davis

The artist shows how a painting is generated by staying true to its central concept, in Illustration from Imagination.

39 CUSTOM BRUSHES

12	19	95	75	70
20	30	35	45	438
1200	125	20	30	60
70	8	12	18	40
20	30	40	36	1053
1448	636	175	409	45
200	150	73	15	50
18	10	600	800	

Download and use pro artists' custom brushes

As well as reading and watching step-by-step art tutorials from the finest fantasy artists in the industry today, in this issue, you can use the same custom brushes they use. We are giving away 39 pro artists' custom brushes – the perfect tools to help you hone your art to a professional standard.

AND ALL THIS! WIPs and finished art available to download, created by pro artists including Brian Sum, Josh Viers, Bruno Wagner, Feng Zhu and others.



Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Sara K Diesel

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Sara has been working as a freelance artist for over three years. She grew up in an artistic family, and says she was lucky enough to

have had their support over the years: "When I was only 14, my dad bought me my first Wacom tablet and I had it all through college."

This gift started Sara's career as a digital artist, "I think of digital painting as 'painting with light', and I try to make that reflect in my work". Some of her biggest inspirations have been Moebius, Donato Giancola and Tran Nguyen.

"They're all artists that have made me work hard and love the art form, all for different reasons," says Sara.

1



1 THE LAMENTATION OF GAHL

"I based this painting on a short story that was written by a friend. A goddess shows distress over her creations - the sleeping wolves surrounding her - and how to tame them."

2 SHE WALKS IN SHADOWS "This piece was supposed to encompass a series of works of Lovecraftian inspiration by female writers. I took inspiration from witchcraft and ritualistic representations, and included classic Lovecraft elements."



ImagineFX Christmas 2015

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com



Artist crit

Jana Schirmer is more than happy to enter Sara's atmospheric worlds of fantasy and myths



"I think Sara's good at capturing a dark mood. Even with the bright reds in *The Lamentation of Gahl*, the scene feels intense, achieved in part by the character's pose and expression."

Johanna Rupprecht

LOCATION: Germany

WEB: www.lyraina.com

EMAIL: artist@lyraina.com

MEDIA: Photoshop, Maya, Cinema4d

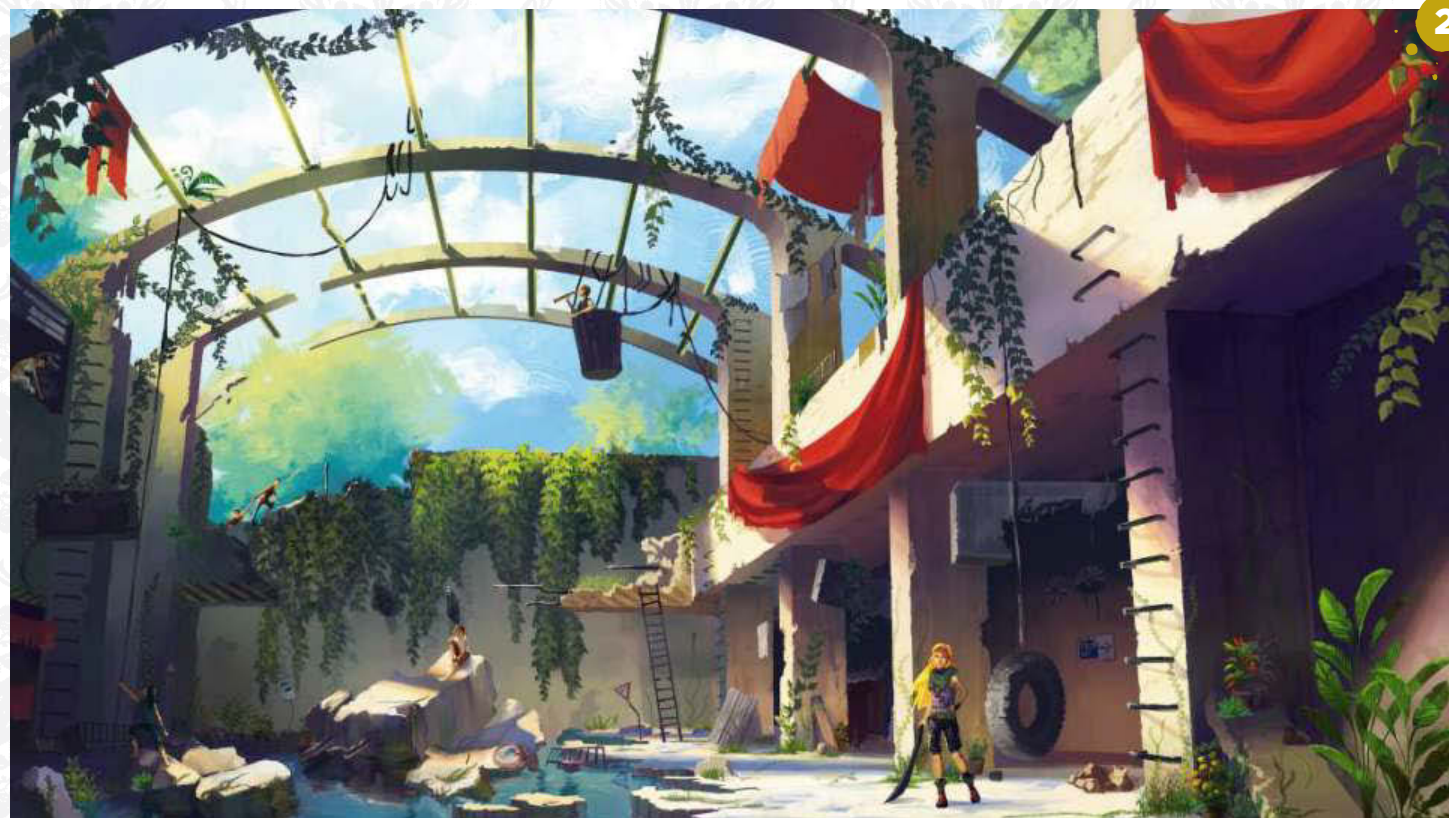
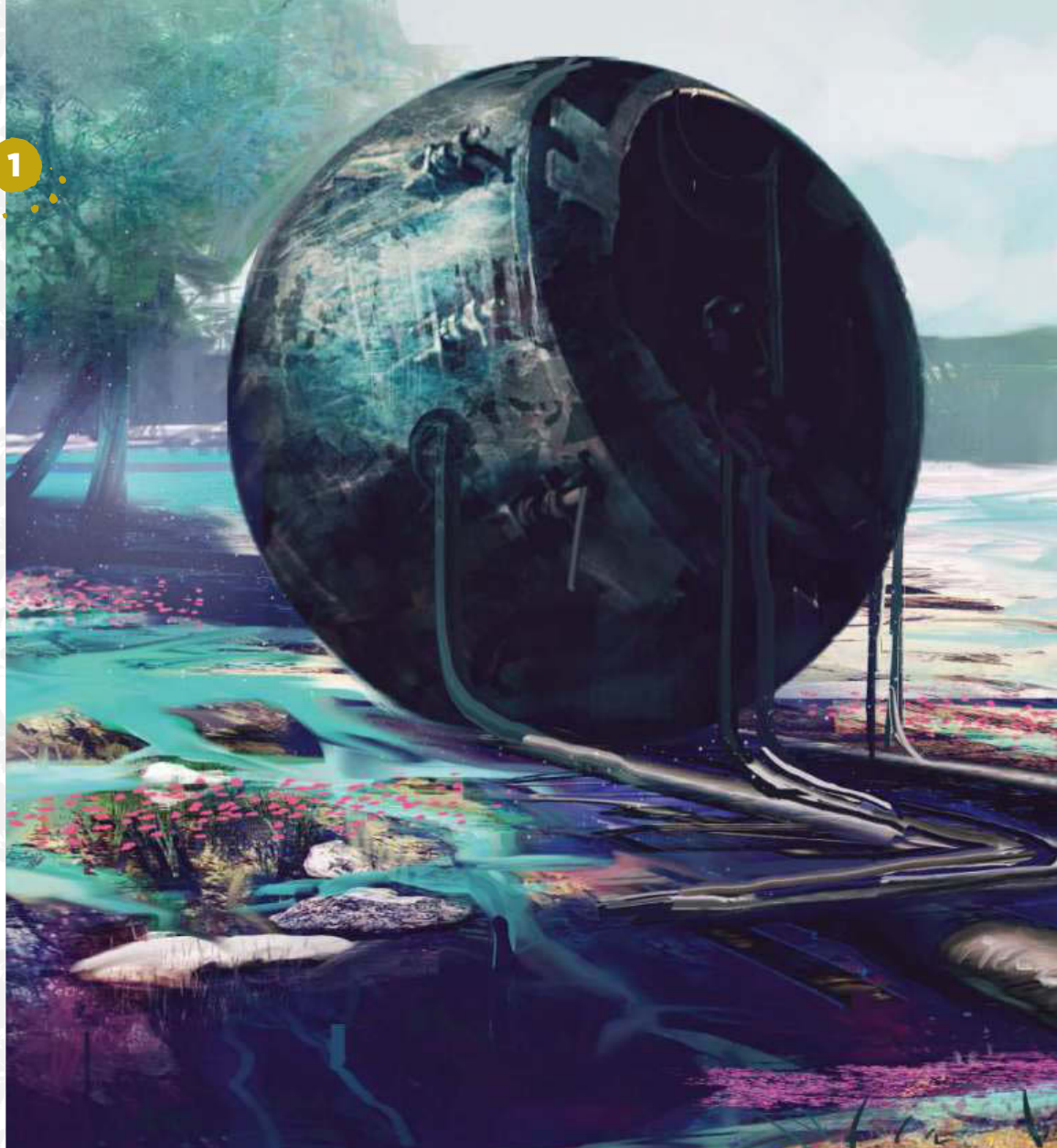


Concept designer Johanna enjoys working in a realistic style using photographs and 3D bases made in Maya and Cinema 4D. But the German illustrator also shows a persuasion for painterly, colourful and stylised work. Having studied biology, Johanna uses her scientific knowledge as inspiration for new artwork. "Both nature and human history are incredible sources of inspiration for new and exciting designs," she reveals.

1 FORGOTTEN "A little speed painting done for fun and to try out a quicker way of conveying ideas, using lots of photo textures and focusing more on mood and atmosphere than accuracy."

2 POST-APOCALYPTIC PLAYGROUND "I created this as a part of a personal project: a post-apocalyptic world where kids had to build a safe zone for themselves in a ruined city, but with a playful and fun atmosphere."

3 SUBMARINE "This is me having some fun conceptualising a submarine. I'm not sure it's entirely functional, but who can resist that smile? I built a 3D model as a base for the architecture, sketched variations of the submarine with pen and paper, then used Photoshop to create the final piece."





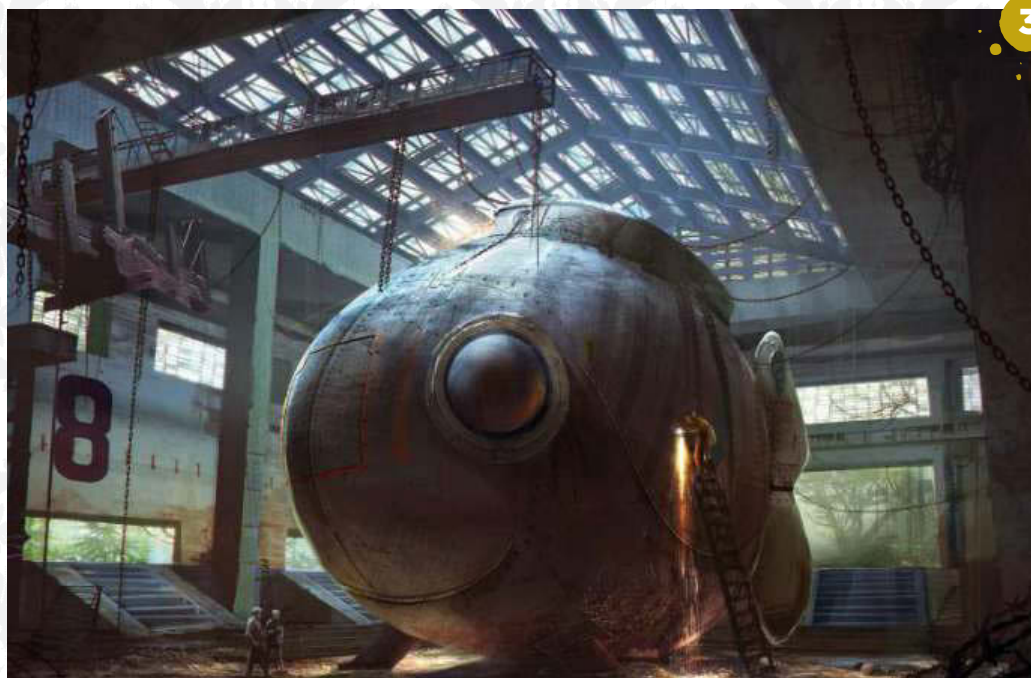
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IMAGINEFX CRIT



"It's always good to see artists display a sense of humour in their work – who wouldn't want to be on board Johanna's cheerful-looking submarine? She's also adept at filling her concept work with colour and light."

Beren Neale,
Acting Editor



Marjorie Davis

LOCATION: US

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Inspired by Disney cartoons drawn by her siblings, Marjorie began her artistic journey at a very young age. "I

remember coping stuff out of Nintendo Power and the art in the booklets I'd get with my Gameboy games," she says.

Discovering she could create her own little worlds, Marjorie was attracted to creating gaming and fantasy art, striving to make a living from her passions.

"I really enjoy the range of things I get to work on when doing freelance. I love the challenge that comes with a new project, and the chance to grow and learn more with each piece."

1



1 DECAY "I was live streaming when a song came on and the rough idea for this piece popped into my head. I was trying to convey the sense of floating in an atmospheric haze and slowly fading into decay."

2 ALIRRAH "A character commission. It was fun to do the layers of clothing - I was looking at nomadic costumes to get an idea of how the leathers and furs would work with the stitches and straps."

3 MAVIS TRAN "Trying to get a mix of style and personalities on the page is the goal for me. I love going through fashion blogs and taking inspiration from the models and clothing."

4 WITHER "This was inspired by my previous piece, Decay, but also by flowers withering as they bloom. I wanted to find a way to paint flower petals and smokey, cloudy goodness!"

2



3



IMAGINEFX CRIT

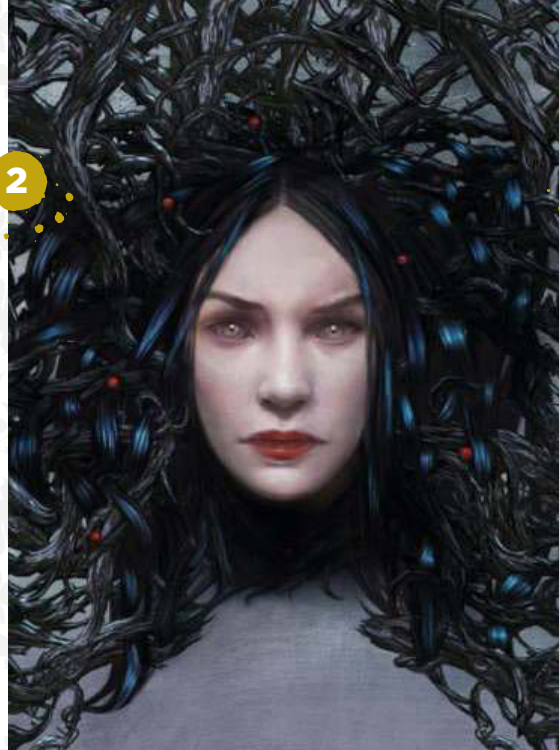


"Marjorie's Decay and Wither pieces are gorgeously fantastical, disturbing and imaginative. In contrast, her character design art shows awareness of real-world materials, and their properties and limitations. A double whammy!"

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor







2

3



Dagmara Matuszak

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MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter



Dagmara has achieved more than her teenage dream of illustrating fantasy novels. She has drawn comics, designed posters and websites, worked on video games and more, but currently paints covers and designs typography for a Polish sci-fi and fantasy book publisher.

"It's a dream job that unites my love for books and fantasy illustration," she says. "I get to illustrate my favourite authors, something I've dreamt of as a kid. Nothing I learned at art school prepared me for it. I'm still learning and I plan to keep on learning till I die!"

4

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I've never seen Snow White portrayed with such intensity as in *Smoke and Mirrors*. Any passing handsome prince may want to think again before rescuing the fairest of them all from her eternal slumber!"

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor



1 MERMAID "This is a personal piece, inspired by a local legend about a mermaid caught and held captive in a church in order to be baptised. She dies and her father, the king of the Baltic Sea, destroys the church."

2 SMOKE AND MIRRORS "Cover illustration for the new Polish edition of Neil Gaiman's short story collection, *Smoke And Mirrors*. It shows Snow White as she's described in one of his stories: beautiful but very, very cold."

3 IN THE WOODS "This is a personal piece. I live in a small village close to a forest, and occasionally I come across red deer. They're incredibly impressive."

4 THE GOLDEN FOOL "Cover illustration for *The Golden Fool* by Robin Hobb. The cover depicts the Fool: a not-quite human, androgynous being in his guise as Lord Golden. The Fool is a wonderful, very complex character and a joy to paint."

Stephanie Cost

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MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter



Stephanie grew up in upstate New York, stealing paint samples from hardware stores and swindling her brothers out of Pokémon cards. After studying art and computer science she moved to Seattle and is still there happily drawing Washington state's abounding trees.

Stephanie uses her art to explore the spectrum between the mechanical and the organic. "I was raised on video games and mythology, and love to fill my work with symbolism and imagery from archetypal legends, hinting at rich layers of psychology behind our love of pop culture and scenery."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



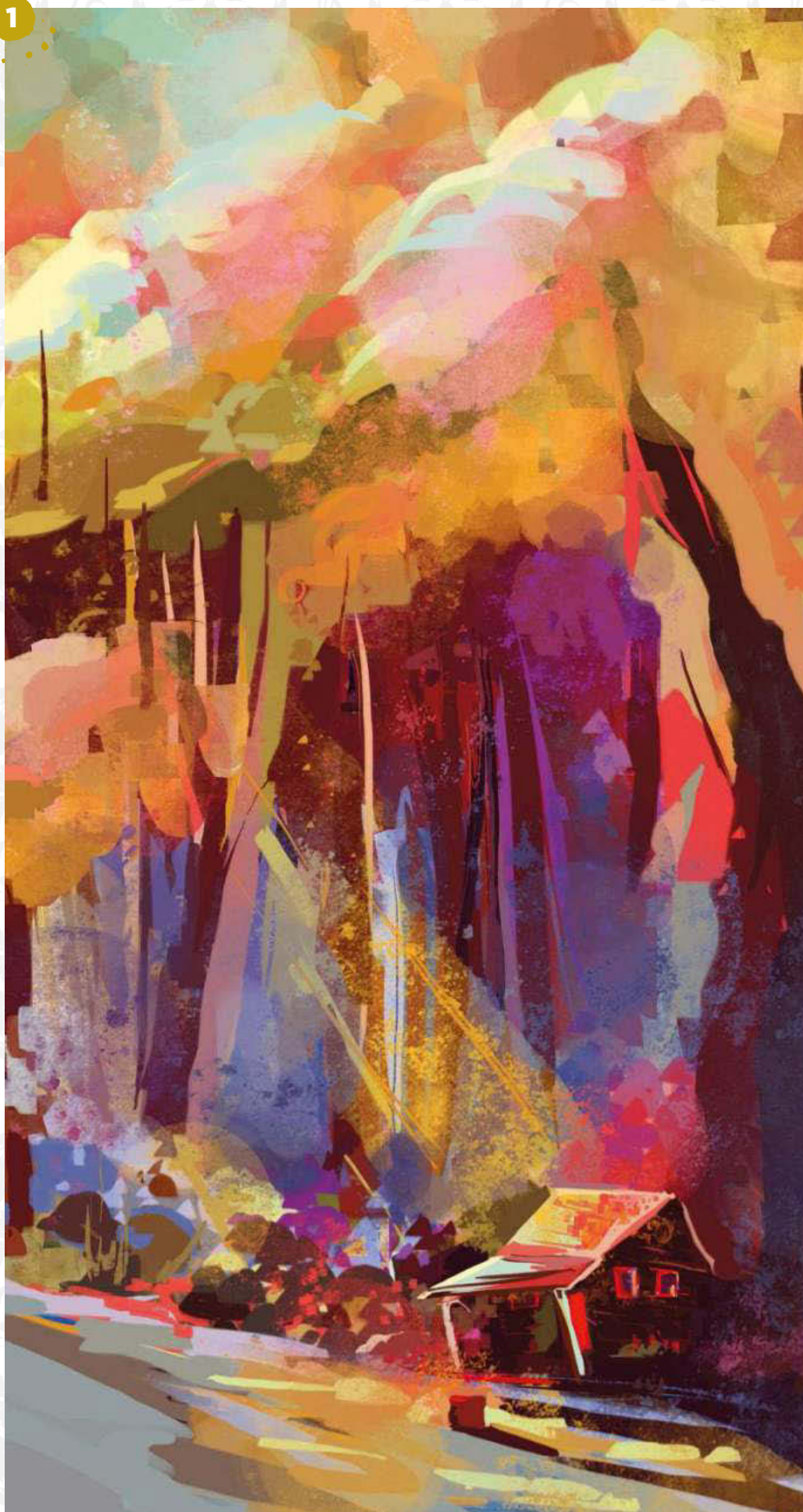
"It's the sense of scale that first strikes me when I view Stephanie's artwork. Followed quickly by an appreciation of how she handles shapes as visual shorthand to develop a scene. Groovy use of muted colours, too."

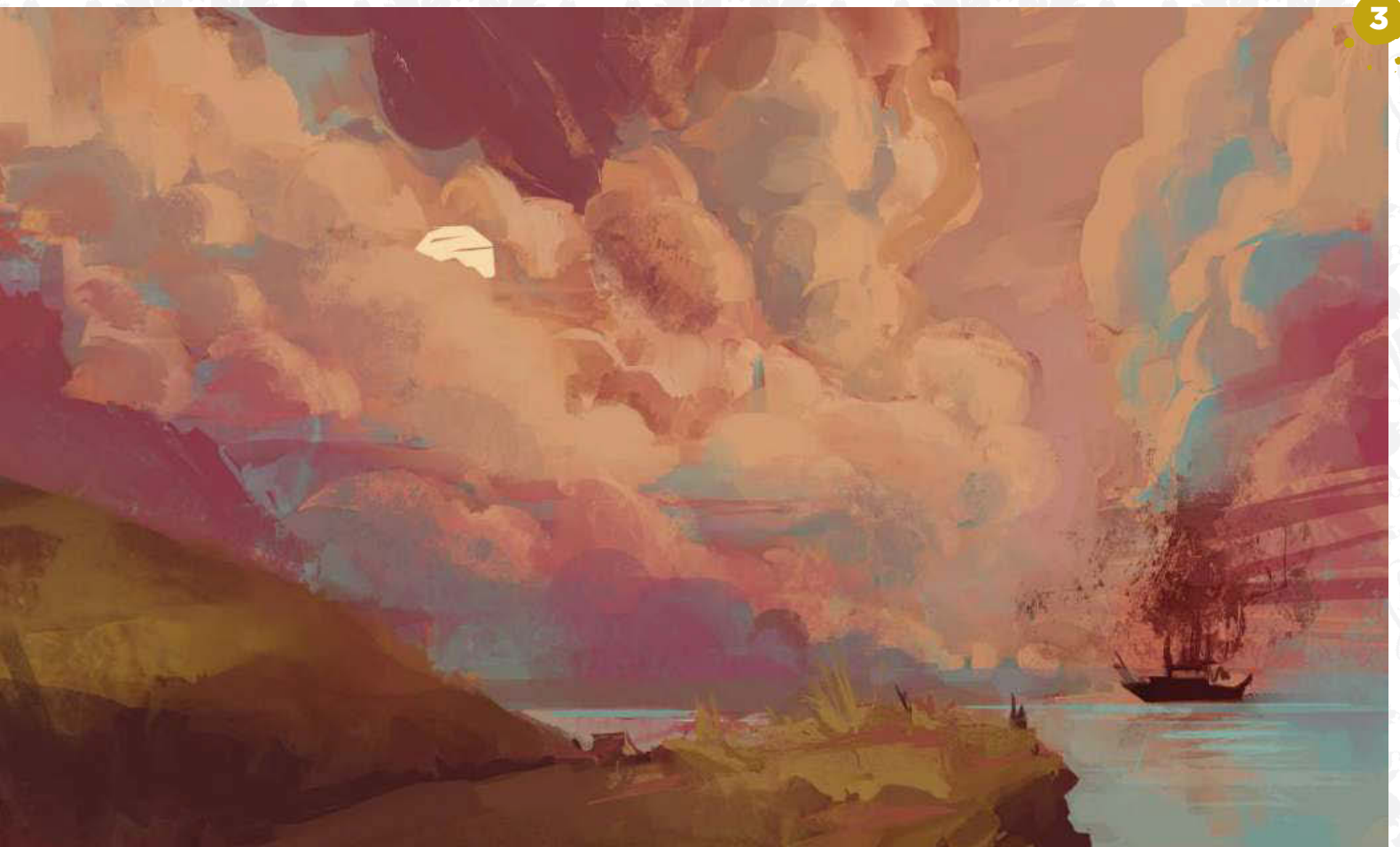
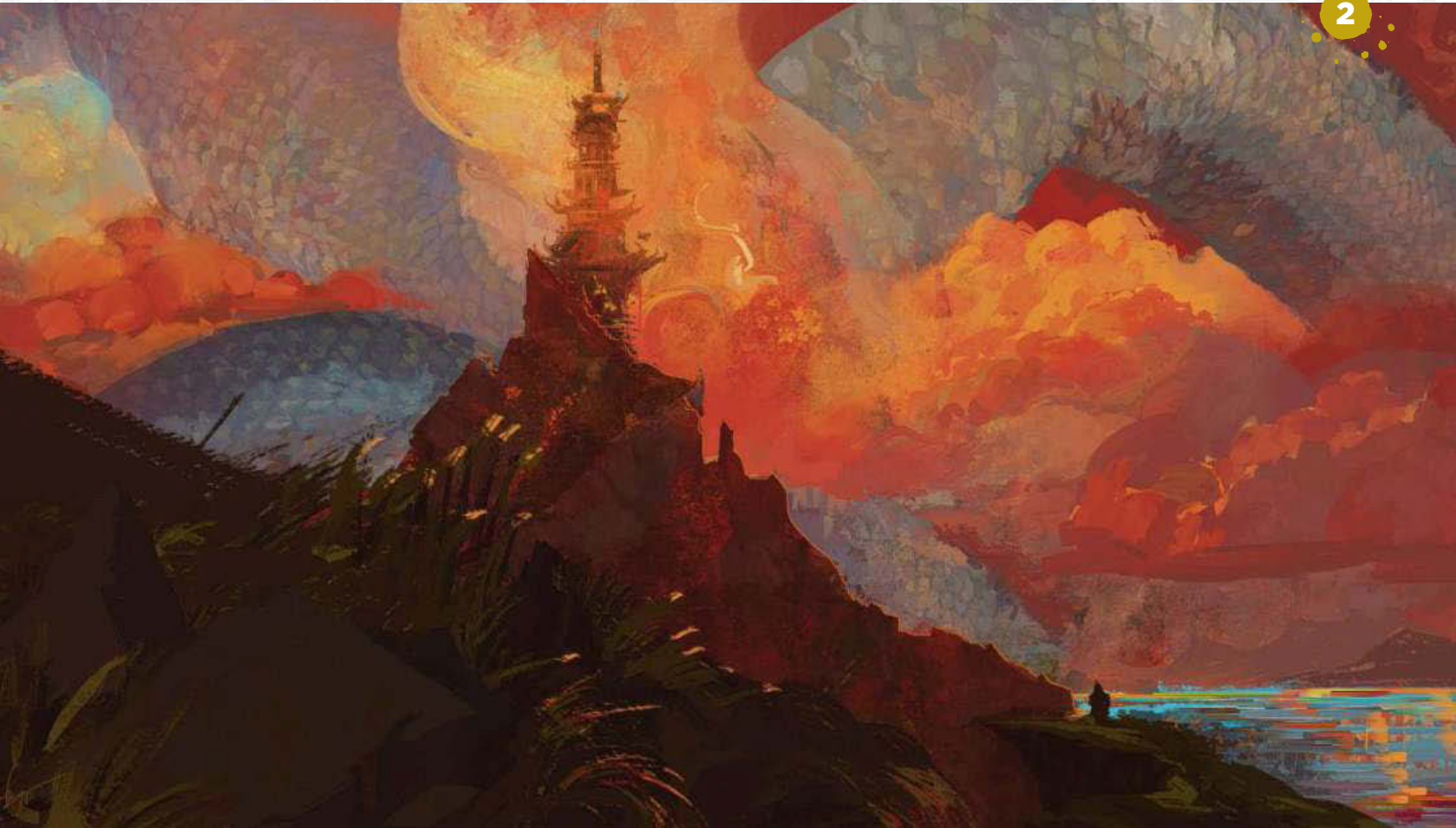
Alice Pattillo,
Staff Writer

1 THE HOBNOB "This is the name my grandfather gave the cabin he built in New York. I made this piece for my mom a few years after he died. It's very abstract and was a ton of fun to make. I let myself play with saturated colours and an impossible scale, my natural go-tos with landscape."

2 DRAGON TEMPLE "I allowed myself to explore a highly graphic, digital mark making. I used a range of photo textures - Buddhist statues, oriental rugs, metalwork - and jumbled them together to create hits of light and mysterious detail in the background. I loved using a rich, decadent palette of sunset colours throughout."

3 STORM "I used a lot of texture-rich Round brushes and vague transitions, contrasted just a few times with sharp edges. I wanted to use creamy, muted pastel colours to create a dream-like world that contrasts with the intrusion of the jagged, alien ship on the horizon."





Denzel Jackson

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.denzelajackson.com

EMAIL: denzelj91@hotmail.com

MEDIA: Photoshop



"Every picture is a story. I'm steadily in hot pursuit of being a great and respected artist," says the Californian native. Truly

inspired by people who have passion for what they do, Denzel hopes to keep that wave flowing by strengthening others to be doers as well.

"I have a long list of aspirations that I'm hounding, and as an artist who has tracked ImagineFX since my beginning, I'm very honoured to have finally earned a spot in its pages," reveals Denzel.

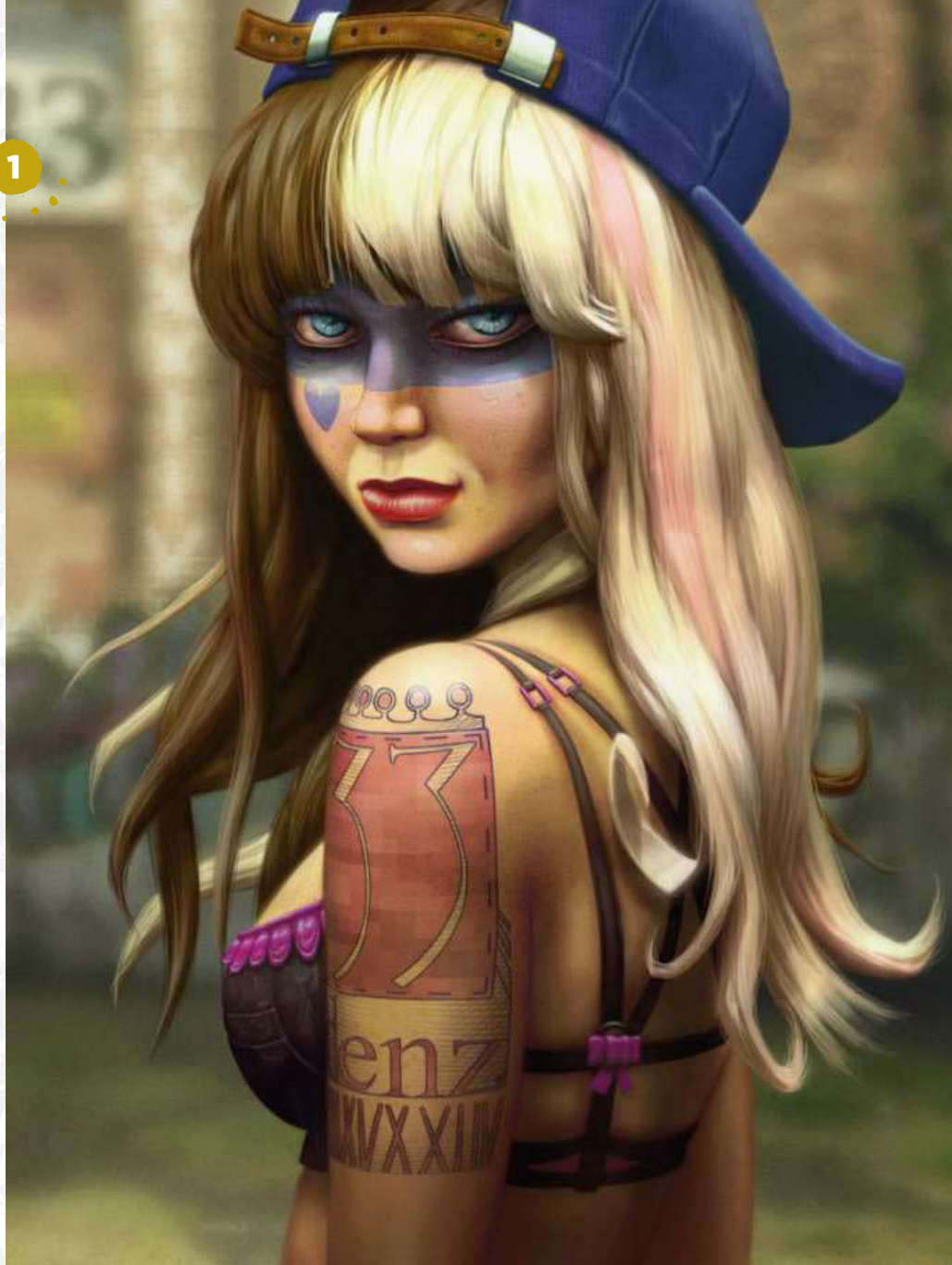
1 NEVER LEAVING "I'll always be here, for as long as I can manage. Creativity is just too special a thing to ignore, and no one should pass up the chance to influence their surroundings."

2 ONLY BATTLE KINGS "I love the underdog. Not just in real life, but in stories, too: David from David and Goliath, the small team that survives the zombie apocalypse, or the 23-year-old artist that pushes."

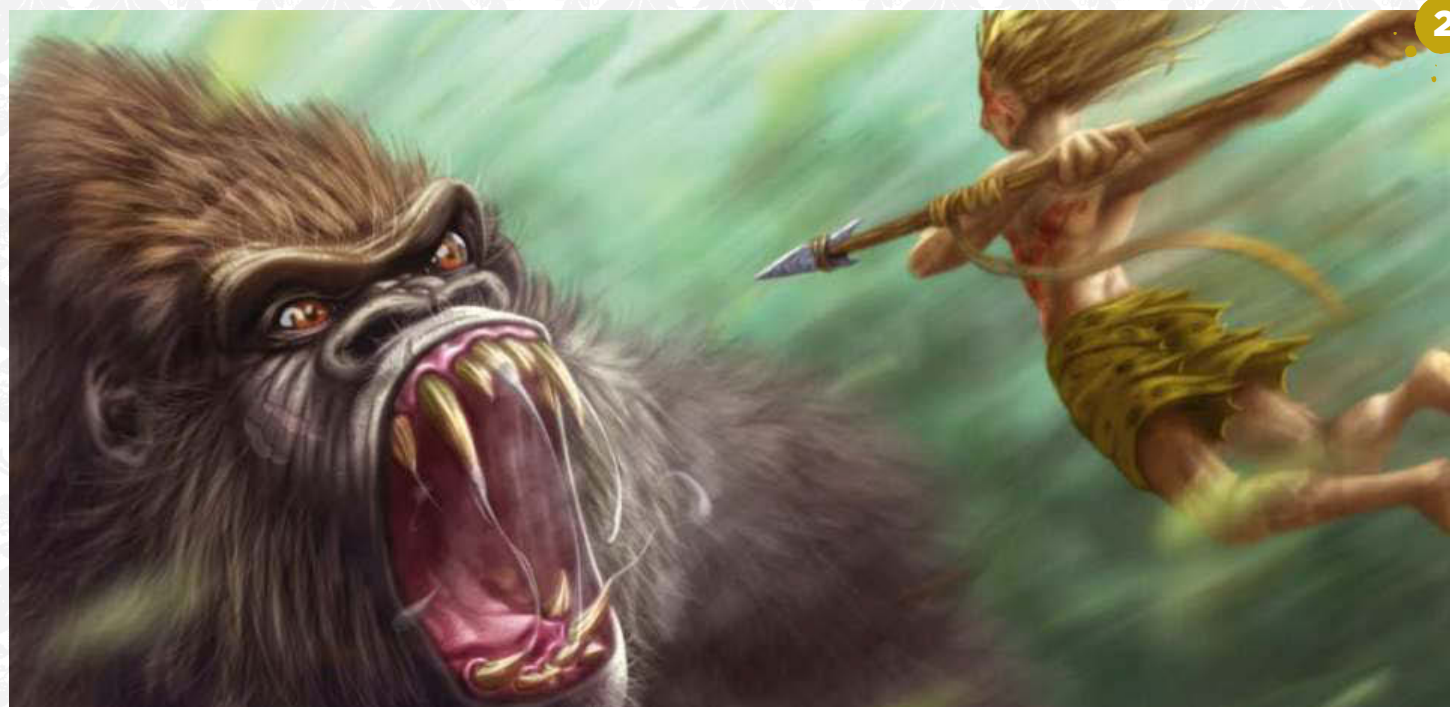
3 ALWAYS BE YOURSELF "I believe if everyone put effort into becoming exactly what they would like, rather than what is easily acceptable, the world would be much funnier and a more interesting place to be a part of."

4 JAAZ 10K "This is a milestone for me, because it commemorates having spent 10,000 hours of dedication and practice towards my skill. I've experienced countless ups and downs, it's been a wild trip and I look forward to the long trek ahead."

1



2



3



4

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Denzel's got a lovely touch with the brush, whether he's depicting a warrior in action, tattooed skin or Día de Muertos makeup. His female characters certainly exude confidence – something that's great to see!"

Alice Pattillo,
Staff Writer

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO EXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

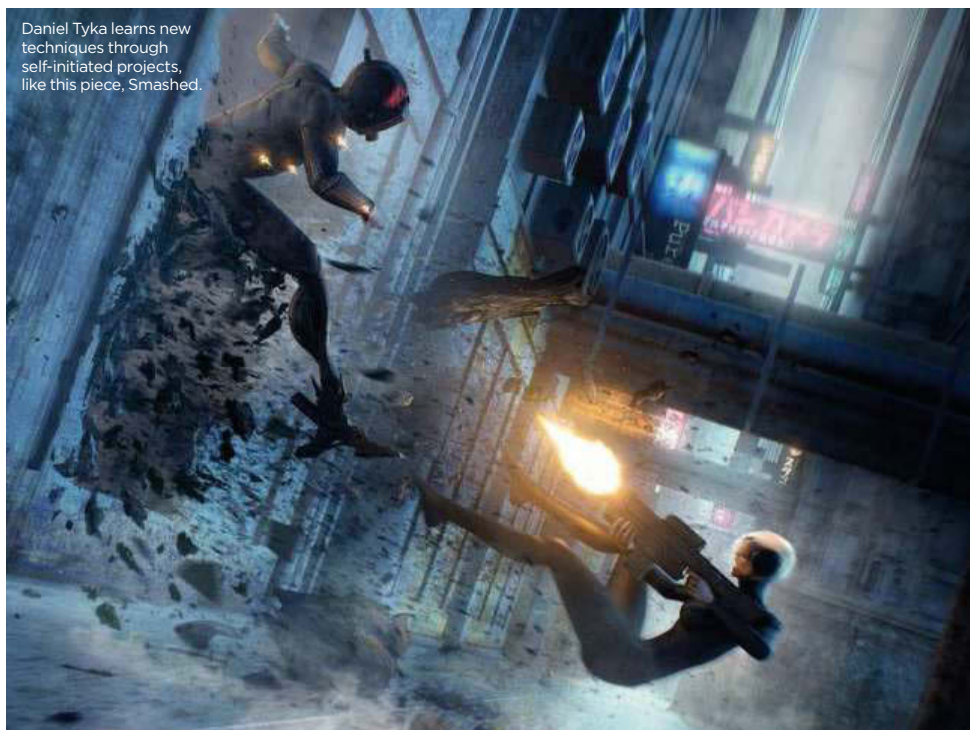
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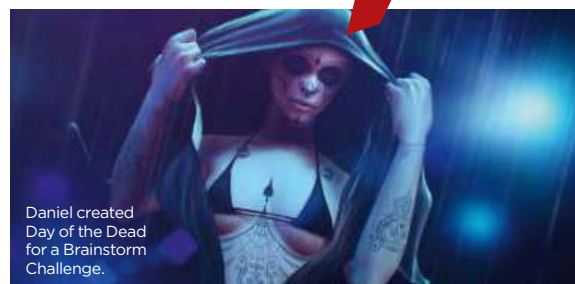


Since dedicating his time to mastering illustration, Tom Fox has seen his skills – and career – blossom.



Daniel Tyka learns new techniques through self-initiated projects, like this piece, *Smashed*.

Become a pro in 10,000 hours



Daniel created Day of the Dead for a Brainstorm Challenge.

This summer, concept and storyboard artist Tom Fox started freelancing with world-famous studio Aardman Animations. Nothing unusual in that, you might think. Except that five years ago Tom was a zoologist, with only a life-drawing class in his artistic arsenal.

Unsatisfied with his zoology degree, Tom embarked on a challenge that completely changed his life. "I'd recently read a book called *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell," he says. "It suggested that to be extraordinarily successful you need a combination of a skill – derived from a minimum of 10,000 hours of study – and fortunate circumstances. I knew I couldn't control the circumstance, but I did have the discipline to study something."

On 28 March 2010, Tom started studying for a minimum of five hours every day. After two years (3,500 hours) he received a scholarship to attend online school The Art Department. Two-and-a-half years (some



completely changed his life. "I'd recently read a book called *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell," he says. "It suggested that to be extraordinarily successful

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TOM FOX CHARTS HIS 10,000 HOURS TO PRO STATUS...



1,000 HOURS

For the first 1,000 hours or so I almost exclusively did observational drawing: life-drawing sessions and still lifes. It was frustrating because I wanted to jump ahead. But I knew that I had to give priority to studying the fundamentals.



2,000 HOURS

More of the same. This was the most intense study I've ever done. Maybe not the most productive, but I really put the hours in. I was 22 and I knew there were people at my level who were 15 or younger. I had to work harder than anyone else.



3,000 HOURS

I received a merit-based 50 per cent scholarship to an online art course. Proof that the hours of study were paying off. All the early life drawing proved to have shaped my understanding of light and form, and this helped me in class.



FUTURISTIC STUDIO

"I'm never satisfied," admits Singapore-born Australia-based artist Darren Yeow, as he shows us around his workspace, while planning his next. **Page 24**



OPENING THE VAULT

How London's Industry Workshops provide pro-artist advice, great networking opportunities and free beer, all in an underground vault. **Page 26**



A NEW DAWN

A dystopian Europe is the subject of game designer and artist Stephen Winterflood's new deck-building card game, evocatively titled Siberian Dawn. **Page 27**



Jose Alves da Silva's portrait of art connoisseur Le Rabbit is one of his most famous 3D pieces.

7,000 hours) later, he was offered a first job in the UK film industry, as a junior concept artist for Universal Studios. In August this year, still 2,000 hours short of his target, he took the next step in his new career and started producing illustrations, concept art and storyboards at Aardman Animations.

It's a remarkable story. But is it really possible to reach an expert level of proficiency with a new skill in 10,000 hours? Can anyone do it? And what's the cost – both physically and mentally?

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

"It was much harder than I imagined," says Tom. "At one point I was working 30-35 hours a week in a coffee shop and studying 40-plus hours on top of that. It takes its toll on your social life, relationships and your body."



Award-winning freelance illustrator and concept artist Daniel Tyka agrees that it's tough. He quit his bank job after deciding he wasn't



A scan from Jose's sketchbook, where he practises his 2D drawing.

“It was much harder than I imagined. It takes its toll on your social life, relationships and your body”

developing fast enough as an artist, and dedicated 16 hours per day to learning new techniques. But sitting alone week after week in his “dark cave” came at a mental cost. “I had to sacrifice most of my social life,” he says. “It meant no more free evenings during the week.”

Daniel's work falls on the darker side of the sci-fi and fantasy spectrum. Book jackets are his speciality, but he's ➔

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

JOSE ALVES DA SILVA

Why sketching has reignited the character artist's passion for 3D

Why did you decide to teach yourself how to draw?

Drawing is a really valuable skill when I'm planning my 3D characters. On a recent vacation, I decided to draw for a couple of hours every day for a month, to improve my skills. Since then I've been trying to do it consistently.

What do you think about the 10,000-hour theory?

I don't think that it should be taken literally, but I firmly believe that if you're passionate then you'll dedicate all those hours to your craft. That's what you wake up for every morning. However, there's a danger that if you feel you're an expert, your progression will stop. The best artists I know consider themselves students, and practise and research to keep evolving. They'll go far beyond 10,000 hours in their lives.

How challenging has it been for you to learn 2D?

When you're learning, everything is challenging. I decided to practise my drawing on paper so there's no Ctrl+Z option – you learn to accept mistakes, and after a while you become bolder and embrace risks. Consistent drawing has really affected the quality of my work.

What's been the outcome?

Developing my 2D skills has ignited my passion for 3D again. When I got back to work I wanted to put that creative joy back in my life. In addition, building the skill of my hand has directly benefitted my ZBrush sculpting work.

What advice would you for mastering a new skill?

Starting a new habit takes motivation and time. Get yourself a sketchbook and take risks.



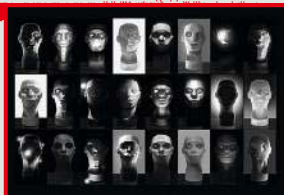
An award-winning, Portugal-based freelance 3D character artist Jose works in advertising, games and film.

www.artofjose.com



4,000 HOURS

Slowly I realised that making an interesting image wasn't about meticulous rendering. It's about interesting shape, composition, narrative and storytelling. I realised many animators can create movement, narrative and story in a 30-second sketch. These sketches often have more life than paintings laboured over for hundreds of hours.

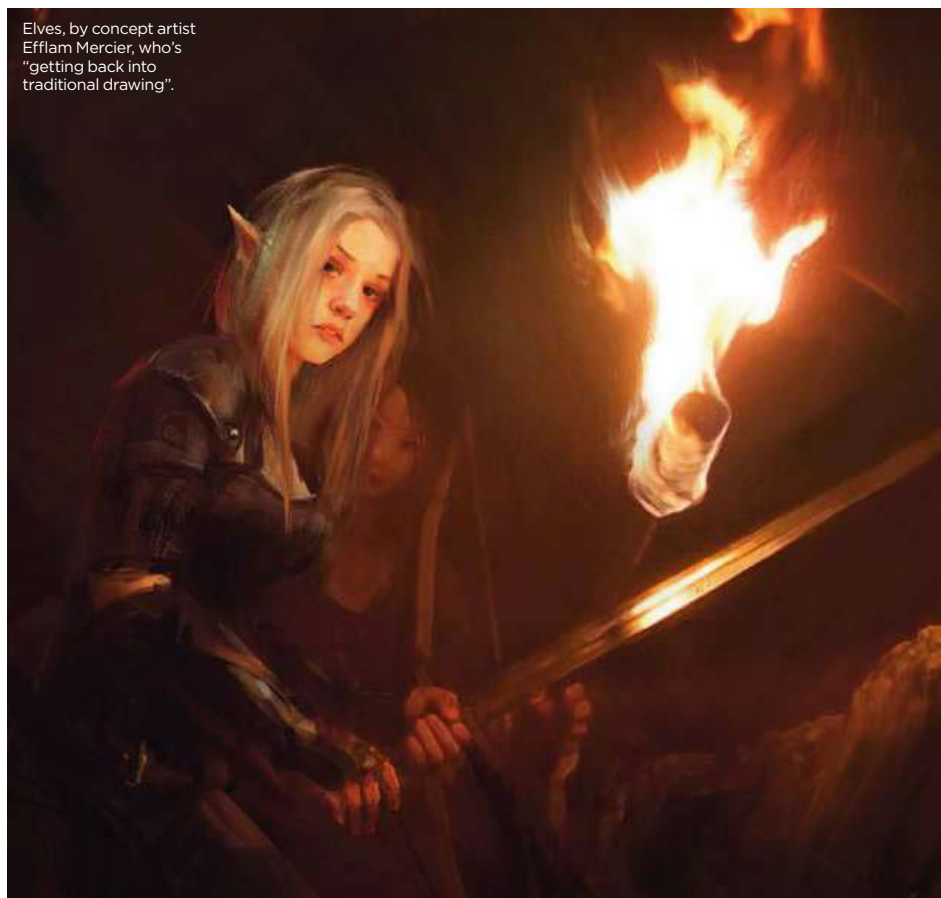


5,000 HOURS

Observational drawing became drawing forms from imagination. I realised a well-placed line can convey as much form as rendering. I spent days drawing simple figures in different views and poses. Progression was fast and rewarding.



Tom is almost at the 8,000 hour mark and says he's progressing faster than ever.



Elves, by concept artist Efflam Mercier, who's "getting back into traditional drawing".

➔ recently been working as a video game concept artist and is continuing to develop new illustration techniques during his spare time. He thinks it's possible to master a new skill by applying the 10,000-hour theory, but points out that it's important to take a structured approach. "It's all about organising your time well," says Daniel. "Learn the basics before you move into more complicated aspects, or you could become overwhelmed and disheartened."

MODEST EXPECTATIONS

"Don't expect progress to happen instantly," says Jose Alves da Silva, a 3D character artist. The freelancer has built up an impressive portfolio of professional 3D illustration work, but recently challenged himself to improve his 2D sketching skills. "With practice you learn something small everyday, such as how to draw that curve on the inner side of the human foot, and these things are



“It's not enough to grind away for 10,000 hours if you're not actively looking for what needs improving”

added to your mental art library," he says. "The more you draw, the more you're able to do so correctly."

The key, says Professor K Anders Ericsson, a specialist on expertise, lies in the type of practice: it has to be focused time spent pushing the boundaries of your ability. Professor Ericsson's 1993 research paved the way for Malcolm's inspirational book, and while he disagrees with the author's 10,000 hour rule – arguing that it isn't a magic number – he believes "deliberate practice" is an essential component in achieving expert proficiency.

"Individual differences, even among elite performers, are closely related to assessed

amounts of deliberate practice," says the professor. "Many characteristics once believed to reflect innate talent are actually the result of intense practice extended for a minimum of 10 years."

It depends what you're learning, too. Fine artist Rebecca Guay is the founder of



professional mentorship programme Illustration Master Class and its online sister programme SmArt School. In her experience, it's faster

to take traditional skills into a digital environment than the other way around. "Digital tools are often easier to start making images with, but students find it very hard to then switch to traditional media if they don't know it," she says.

Rebecca agrees that the quality of practice is crucial. "It's not enough to grind away at 10,000 hours of figure drawing, for example, if you're not trying to see what needs improving, and evolving your skill in each moment. You need to be fully present



6,000 HOURS

I began working on Snow White and The Huntsman 2 for Universal studios – my big break. I was given the opportunity because I emailed and rang around, and was asked to come and meet the supervising art director. When we met he said I didn't have a very appropriate portfolio, but I could have a week or two and we'd see where it went from there. In the end I stayed there for four months and learnt so much.



7,000 HOURS

My work continues as a freelancer, although I'm spending almost all my time at Aardman Animations in Bristol. You can practically feel the creativity in the air here. People are always generating new ideas, introducing you to new artists and influences. I'm slowly moving into animating and storyboarding. I'm almost at the 8,000 hour mark, and progressing as fast, or faster, than ever. I've seen no plateau to learning visual arts, only to motivation.



Efflam says learning core art skills is as important as knowing the software.



A traditional oil on canvas piece, Little Fish, painted by Rebecca Guay.



and focused, not just mindlessly drawing away in your sketchbook."

"I see a lot of people who are missing out by hanging out at the tip of the iceberg," says French concept artist Efflam Mercier. "Want to learn 3D? Then don't just click around and be guided by limited information."



You become so much more fluent in a medium by learning the technology, the history and the logic principles that the tools are built on."

"Break down your subject into manageable and discrete categories," advises Tom. "I study anatomy, light and form, linear perspective, composition and colour theory as my main categories."

DON'T FORGET DOWN-TIME

If you're committing to 10,000 hours, it's also crucial to invest in down-time to keep your pace of learning sustainable. Deliberate practice is fatiguing and, like your body, your brain needs time to recover. "You have to

Open Your Eyes, by Winona Nelson. It took her five years of working 40 hours a week to become a professional artist.



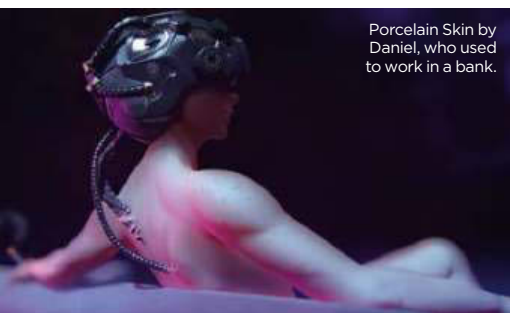
process the information that you're learning," points out Philadelphia-based artist Winona Nelson, "and then let it bake in".

Of course, it's not just about rolling up your sleeves and putting in the time and effort. Scientists believe there are significant genetic and environment factors in the mix that can affect the time period over which an individual reaches their peak of proficiency, and those factors include personality, cognitive ability and age. Nevertheless, taken as shorthand for 'a significant amount of intense practice', 10,000 hours becomes a useful benchmark for any artist hoping to master a new skill.

How do you find that sort of time? Tom advises getting up early and learning while you're fresh. "I've had periods where I've got up at 4:30am to draw. That's what separates you from the competition: you dragged yourself out of bed and squeezed another 500 hours out of that year."

"Starting a new habit always takes motivation," agrees Jose. "But after you've done it for a while it's like doing physical exercise: if you don't do it then your body starts asking for it."

For Tom, it's no longer about hitting 10,000 hours. "The 10,000 figure is great for entering the industry," he reflects. "But if you want to be the best you can be, set your sights higher. Now I know I'm committed to a lifetime's study - and I love it." ●



Porcelain Skin by Daniel, who used to work in a bank.



8,000 - 10,000 HOURS

Where and what will that work be? Who knows? One thing is for certain: the job offers are starting to come to me now rather than having to hunt them out. After so many months of study there's nothing more gratifying than someone emailing or ringing to say, "I recognise your hard work and ability - would you like to work for or with me in the future?" What a feeling that is!



My open-chassis Monster Rig - I chose this chassis because I absolutely love the rugged beastly aesthetic.

The downlights in the ceiling were upgraded with dimming capabilities to adjust for better video exposure if I'm recording video.



My dark grey glass table is fitted with a side return to keep everything within easy reach.

Darren Yeow

Pimp my ride From sound-proofed walls to optimum lighting, the Australia-based artist explains his quest for the perfect work space



Over the past few years, my freelance career has shifted from concept artist to a creative-business role. I still design and draw every day, but I also have many other responsibilities, such as sales, marketing, finance, logistics management and team leadership as my business develops from client work to creating primarily for my own brands - and I think my office reflects this.

My method is primarily digital because it shortens the client-feedback process. While I still sketch on paper, I don't tend to use

'messy' media because I keep my main office as clean as possible for client and investor meetings. If I need textures, I'll create them in the garage where I have a second workspace setup for tasks such as painting, sculpting and woodwork.

The work rig is an open-chassis, liquid-cooled monster that can handle almost any task I throw at it, from 2D or 3D to 4k video production. I have three monitors attached to it: two of which are Cintiqs (21UX and 27QHD) for on-screen drawing and painting, and a third that's a large, 30-inch monitor to place references or do business stuff. I also

have a separate television to review footage and do presentations.

I've been in this office for about six months now, and it's on the second floor to the rear of our newly built home. While I love that my son and wife are home most of the time, I sometimes need to hit tight schedules and this setup enables the necessary physical separation when necessary.

We altered the original floorplans with the builder so that I could increase the studio space and I also upgraded a bunch of things to enable my business to function more effectively. For instance, the room has an

The walls have embedded sound-insulation, which means I'm able to Skype international clients at any time without waking my family.



Reference and inspirational books on a myriad of subjects. I never had the chance to go to art school, so these books were my education and they mean a lot to me.

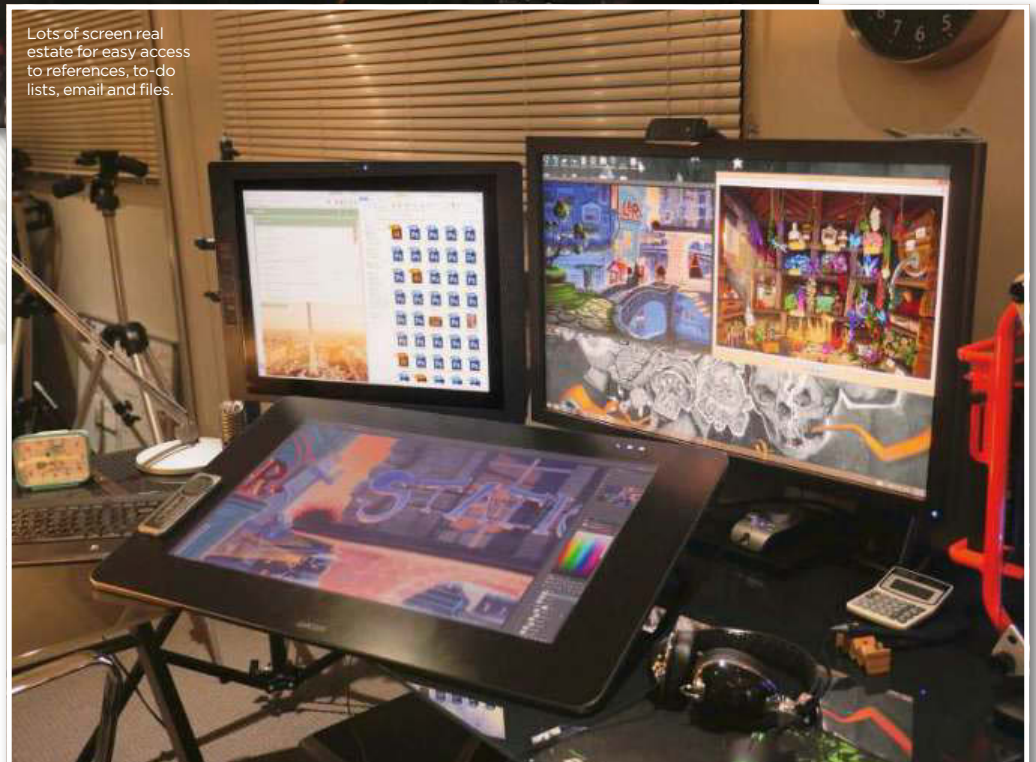


Thanks to my rear shelves, I'm surrounded by inspiring properties, art and technology.



Found gifts from my toddler and a photo of when my wife was pregnant - to remind me of what's important.

Lots of screen real estate for easy access to references, to-do lists, email and files.



NBN connection (the fastest residential internet in Australia), making it possible to upload client files in 10-15 minutes instead of a day or more, and I also upgraded the sliding wardrobe doors with ceiling-to-floor mirrors so that I could use myself as an art reference and practise presentations.

I'm never satisfied and already planning the features for my next office/home, but I do admit the current setup works well. I feel inspired, relaxed and ready to do good work whenever I enter the room.

Darren created the Nomad Art Satchel, and you can see his art at www.stylus-monkey.com.



Creature and concept artist Dave Neal passes on his invaluable industry advice to the audience.



One of Titus Lunter's concept environment pieces – Titus was one of this year's speakers.

Dave Neal believes you need to understand reality before adding stylisation to your art.



A vault of opportunity

Work hard, play harder This year's Industry Workshops provided budding concept artists with a thriving networking hub

Stepping into a dark and damp tunnel leading under central London might not seem like fun on a sunny day, but with the promise of top art industry professionals and free beer, who could say no?

Set in an underground vault, this year's Industry Workshops looked more like a games environment than a conference – complete with loud sound effects shaking the exposed piping. Boasting the likes of Min Yum, Nikolai Lockertsen, Thomas Scholes, Noah Bradley and Suzanne Helmigh, it's an packed event for concept artists and wannabe concept artists alike, giving the opportunity to mingle with the best in the field and learn from live demos and lectures.

"At events like this you can place yourself on a spectrum and meet others who face the same issues," says joint organiser Richard Burns. "It's also a good place to say 'Hey, I'm out here, you might dig my stuff'. That's important if you want to showcase your skill in the real world – people might even offer you a job."

"Industry Workshops is a little bubble universe where, selfishly, I can talk to people I enjoy the company of, and discuss cool ideas with. Being able to exist in that, even if only for a few days a year, is probably more important now than it ever has been."

This year's event has grown from last year on every level, with over 400 people and six



London Atelier of Representational Art (LARA) offered classes at the event.

times the amount of recruiters. The content offered has also extended this year to include 2D, 3D and traditional art. Highlights included Mark Hill's insight into designed storytelling, Titus Lunter delving into psychology and Dave Neale looking at stylisation, as well as the infinite opportunities to network, share ideas and enjoy yourself alongside contemporaries.

Richard admits his plans for IW are: "To get to the point where we can align with people who share our vibe and can mutually learn from. Throw a few contrarians into the mix and trust people with it... then we'll organise an event!"

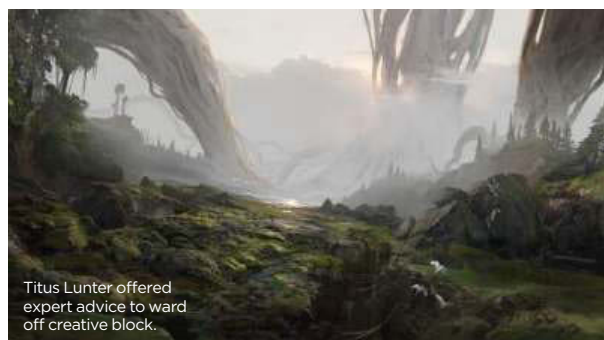
Find out more about the 2015 and 2016 events at www.industryworkshops.co.uk.



Joint organiser Daniel Matthews pours a pint of complimentary craft ale for an eager attendee.



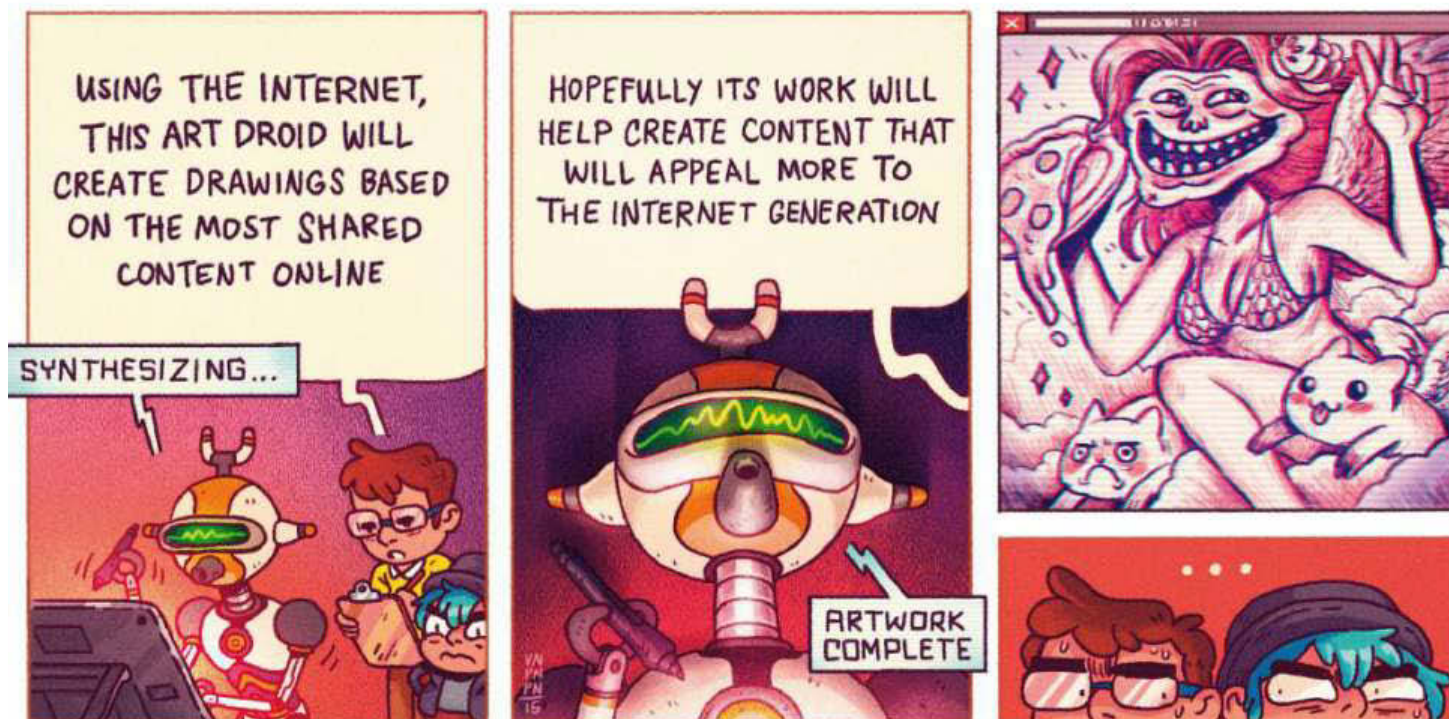
Dave Neal showed off his experimentations with stylisation at IW.



Titus Lunter offered expert advice to ward off creative block.



Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Building a continent one card at a time...

Cold war Stephen Winterflood's latest project is a deck-building card game set in a dystopian Europe



With years of industry experience, having worked as a game designer and artist, Stephen Winterflood has already made mobile puzzle games by himself. His latest online deck building card game, *Siberian Dawn*, channels his skills as a novelist to create a futuristic Europe on the brink of war.

Work on what would become *Siberian Dawn* started back in 2012, with Stephen originally aiming to make a Victorian horror game. After deciding that the theme was too dark, the project was shelved but he kept the engine and used it for *Siberian Dawn*, which he thought would have more appeal.

From soldiers to cultists, the characters in the game were all created in Photoshop. "The design echoes a grim industrial civilisation combined with a harsh environment, so the costumes are heavy and protective," Stephen says. "I've used medieval themes and looked at European comic art to achieve a look of strange opulence."

Studying the likes of *Magic: The Gathering* and a diverse range of other games showed



Photoshop lighting effects help to enhance the 3D appearance of Stephen's characters.

Stephen that the artwork had to incorporate the mechanics of gameplay. "Each group of characters needed to share a distinct look, but also show an individuality that would make them easy to distinguish," he says.

Siberian Dawn will be available on PC and Android later in the year. Follow its progress at www.facebook.com/SiberianDawn.



Stephen used strong shapes to make his cards stand out on the online deck builder...

...before unifying his artwork by applying gritty, textured layers to the background.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, **Beren Neale**, on beren@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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We're all fans of art!

I've noticed hundreds of artists out there who draw the Harry Potter series, especially on Society6. I can't help but wonder about copyright. Is there a way around it, or is it that they don't care? I just want to be careful before I start making my own artwork.

Jentry Taylor, via email



Beren replies First of all, nice name! And second, this is a great question, whether you're starting out as an artist or you're just not sure about copyright. As a rule of thumb, it's fine to do your own version of another artist/company's IP (intellectual property – like Harry Potter), as long as you're not making money from it. If you're doing it because you're inspired by said character/world, then all is groovy! But if you're making a stack of pennies from someone's hard work, that's utterly ungroovy. Also illegal. Which is bad.

This kind of bleeds into other areas of artistic honesty. There are infamous cases of people taking artists' work (whether in part or in whole), copying it and then selling it off as their own. Whether they made money or not, that is, quite frankly, totally jive.

Back to your question: just look at professional artists like Dave Rapoza. He got a lot of attention for his personal (not commissioned) series of the characters from He-Man. They were brilliantly done, and he wasn't making cash from them. Just loads of cool points from fellow artists. He probably got paid work off the back of it too, because it was a showcase for his talents.

2D, or not 2D?

I've been a professional concept artist for a year now, and have been buying ImagineFX on and off for years. I still find your workshops are full of great tips for digital artists, but I have noticed one thing that's a little lacking: 3D workshops!

I think these days it's becoming more expected in the industry that digital artists

Dave Rapoza's realistic take on characters from the He-Man cartoons was a personal project that garnered a lot of praise and raised his profile, too.



DID YOU MISS OUR INDIE COMICS ISSUE? See opposite for more details to see how you can get hold of it and others, too!



This moody concept piece was created by Brian Matyas, who used SketchUp to compose and light the scene.

have not only 2D skills, but also 3D. I'm no stranger to free 3D software packages like SketchUp, but I'd like to see tutorials that bridge the gap between the two dimensions.

Iwan Turner, via email

Beren replies This is a timely email, because the subject has been on the ImagineFX team's collective brain for a while. Short answer: we do it already! We've had a series of single page 'Core Skills' tutorials on SketchUp (see issues 109-116), and this issue's workshops by Josh Viers and Feng Zhu follow initial steps in 3D and further work in Photoshop to create mega concept art. No doubt, we can, and possibly will, incorporate more 3D elements into the magazine (for example, in the Q&A section), but be sure to check out past issues for some dynamite 2D/3D bangers, notably in issues 126 (Brian Matyas uses SketchUp) and 125 (Matt Kohr takes on Blender).

Just send it!

I've been trying to find a list of your submission guidelines for the FXPosé section. I've been to ImagineFX's Facebook page where you provide a link, but it only sends me to your home page and I can't seem to find the guidelines anywhere on the main website, Google or Facebook. I'd like to know how I can get my art to you.

Stephen Rogers, via email

Beren replies Hi Stephen, I receive this question all the time, and the simple answer is: just send us your art! Usually it's a case of emailing us a link to your online portfolio (as long as your site loads a little quicker than a comatose slug!). In addition, keep your best art at the fore. If you're not sure of the difference between your best and your favourite, get an honest artist friend to tell you. We may be more interested in your most recent painting, than an image that you see as the turning point of your skills.

If you're sending us images via email, make sure the images aren't going to kill our inbox. We're used to evaluating an image at thumbnail size, so don't sweat it. As for waiting for a response, I have to admit our small team often doesn't find the time to respond to entries that aren't quite up to the job. However, this is something that we're working on.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Frida Lundqvist
[@fridouw](https://twitter.com/fridouw)

“My latest piece! :)”



Johnny Garcia
[@johnnygarcia](https://twitter.com/johnnygarcia)

“Wouldn't want to be under this guy's command.”



Mat Sadlet
[@matsadlerart](https://twitter.com/matsadlerart)

“I've created loads of artwork for this game on Kickstarter, please go back it!”



Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 128

December 2015

Brett Parson reveals how he paints the iconic Tank Girl, in our indie comics special that also features comic storytelling tips, a caricature of Hellboy, and Tintin in action!



Issue 127

November 2015

Discover the skills you need to break into the video game industry, with advice from pro artists including Remko Troost, Ilya Golitsyn and Elliott Lilly.



Issue 126

October 2015

Our monochrome special features 10 key artists who thrive on limitations. Elsewhere, Sara Forlenza paints a historical drama and Patrick J Jones uses charcoal.



Issue 125

September 2015

Inside this illustration special are 10 of the most unique artists working today, Game of Thrones art, and Donato Giancola painting a scene from Tolkien's The Silmarillion!

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ImagineFX Christmas 2015

A detailed image of a BB-8 droid, a small spherical robot with a white body and orange bands, featuring a large black eye and a smaller orange eye.

WIN!

A BB-8 DROID

To celebrate the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, we are giving readers the chance to win one of five BB-8 droids by Sphero.

With this gadget you can design a route for BB-8 and control from your smart device. You can also create and send holographic videos.

BB-8 will learn to recognise your voice, and adapt personality as you interact.

Who wouldn't want one?

All you have to do to be in with a chance of owning one of these remarkable gadgets is answer the following question:

WHAT EPISODE IS STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS?

A. VII

B. VI

C. IV

ENTER ONLINE NOW FOR FREE AT

www.futurecomps.co.uk/WIN-BB8

By taking part you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules. Open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 and over. The closing date is 11:59pm on 31 December 2015 (GMT). Five winners drawn at random from the correct entries will be entitled to one BB-8 droid each. Specification may vary from pictured model. Only one entry per household; multiple entries will be disqualified. No cash equivalent. See www.futureplc.com/competition-rules for full terms and conditions.

Note: BB-8 is controlled by a smartphone app, which is available on Android and iOS. You are responsible for ensuring that BB-8 is compatible with your phone.

Artist Q&A

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The
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
panel

Mark Molnar
 Mark works on projects for film and game companies. His past clients include Lucasfilm, Time Warner, Weta Workshop, Eidos, Applibot and Fantasy Flight Games.
www.markmolnar.com

Sara Forlenza
 Sara lives in Italy, and after spending many years as a traditional painter, made the move to digital. She works mostly on book covers, digital card games and RPGs.
www.saraforlenza.deviantart.com

Tony Foti
 Tony is a freelance illustrator whose work can be found throughout the publishing and gaming industries, most often for Fantasy Flight's successful Star Wars lines.
www.tonyfotiart.com

John Petersen
 John is a production artist and animator for Engineering Systems, Inc. He's also an illustrator whose clients include Monte Cook Games and Catalyst Game Labs.
www.petersenart.com

Bram Sels
 Bram is a freelance illustrator and concept designer. He has worked for a range of companies including Ubisoft, Axis Animation, 3DTotal and Wideshot Entertainment.
www.artofboco.com



Question

How can I enhance my futuristic racing scene?

Chad Maloney, Canada

Answer

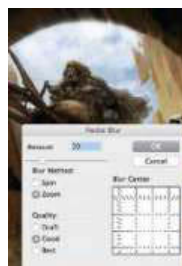
Mark replies



To answer this question I'll depict a dynamic racing scene between two speeder bikes in the back alleys of Tatooine.

Because I'm keen to use an extreme perspective I do a rough thumbnail sketch and then pose a couple of free, simple speeder bike 3D models, using ZBrush. Then I do a quick render without any sharp light sources in Keyshot after setting up my camera. This gives me a good head start with the perspective and composition, and acts as a base for the whole digital painting process.

Now I jump into Photoshop and start blocking in the alleyways. I use different



To create a dynamic racing scene you have to place the viewer in the middle of the action, use a strong perspective and then add some additional effects to spice it up, such as Radial Blur.

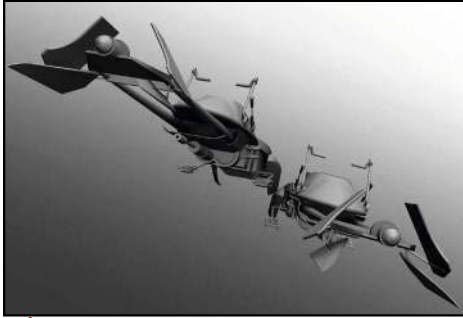
photos from Morocco, and use the Free Transform tool to adjust their positioning. I build up my scene around a one-point perspective, and to strengthen my perspective even further I place the two speeder bikes coming from my vanishing point. This not only adds an extra level of depth, but gives my scene much more dynamism and speed.

From this point on the whole process involves painting to develop the scene, and the details. During this stage I make an effort to introduce as many overlapping elements as possible, because this helps the viewer understand what's going on in different areas of the composition.

Artist Q&A Need our advice?

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Step-by-step: Use 3D models to help develop a scene



1 Creating a simple 3D scene to block in a more extreme perspective can help when creating action-oriented artwork. Even if you're not a 3D expert, play around with royalty-free models and set up a couple of lights and a camera to quickly try out more interesting compositions. I do exactly this with the two speeder bikes.



2 I use some photos to composite the background together. I also paint in the two figures on the speeder bikes and establish the positive-negative space ratio. This describes areas in the image that either contain visual information or are relatively empty. It helps me to direct the viewer's eyes more effectively.

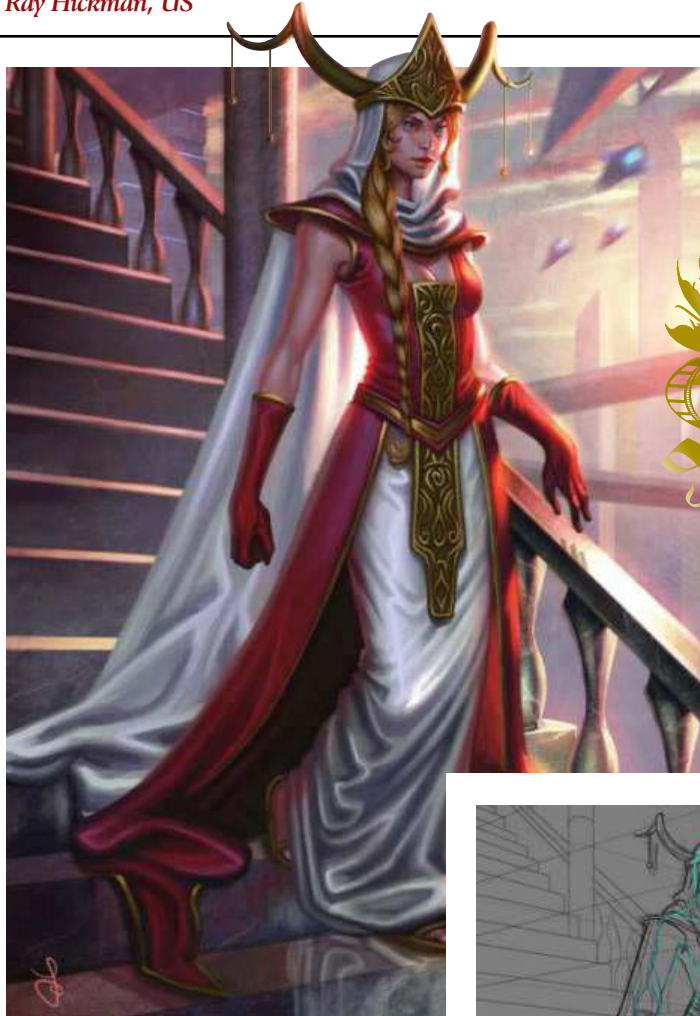


3 My goal is to create an impressionistic storyboard frame from one of the films. To this end, I try to keep the style rough and painterly and cover up most of my photo textures, using brushes that emulate oils and acrylics. I enhance the detailing around the two figures and bikes, which strengthens my focal areas.

Question

What advice can you give me for painting the clothing of a regal Star Wars figure?

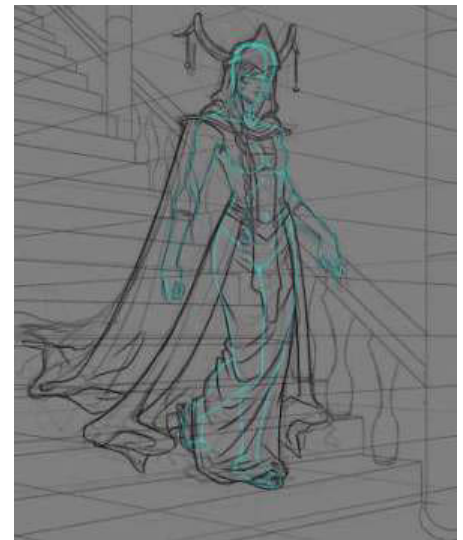
Ray Hickman, US



I note where the fabric of the clothing meets the ground: at this point the folds will be essential even if I choose to paint a very stiff-looking fabric.



I draw the anatomy of my characters under their clothing. This enables me to adjust the fabric and folds on the body.



Answer Sara replies



In the Star Wars universe, figures from royalty often wear rich, elegant clothes. They have elements that are both futuristic and bizarre, and have the characteristics of historical clothing.

I take inspiration from Greek and Roman tunics for the skirt, and medieval clothing for the dress. For the headpiece and gold inserts I look to the queens of ancient Egypt. I lay down flat colours with a Hard brush and add basic light and shadows with the same brush. To make the fabric of the skirt look shiny and soft I can either use a Soft brush without any texture, or the Smudge tool.

The skirt creates folds that follow the body shape and the tunic casts its reflected colour on it, so I pick the red colour with the Eyedropper tool, I set my brush's Opacity to 50 per cent and add some shades of red to the skirt. The tunic and the mantle will remain more rigid and fold only on the waist, shoulder and floor. Finally, I paint gold metal on the headdress, sandals and inserts in the tunic using a Hard brush.

Artist's secret



DEPICT FOLDS
A stiff fabric produces a few folds that I draw using hard and broken lines. A light fabric, such as silk produces many folds that I draw with rounded lines to give an idea of softness.



Question

Please help me compose a seedy Star Wars gambling den

Justine Cottle, Australia

Answer

Sara replies



I start by developing an idea of what I want to draw, by collecting references and documentation. I study the attitude of people to the casino, as well as the atmosphere, the environment and the types of games being played. I'll have to put all these elements into the Star Wars setting, where futuristic elements blend with those of the past and faerie tales. I keep in mind that famous phrase: "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." I think this is the key to capturing that authentic Star Wars ambience.

My gambling den has an atmosphere that's reminiscent of a saloon from the Wild West: it's smoky and dark, a meeting place where people of all races, shapes and sizes come and go, and gamble and drink. To create an interesting-looking composition, I choose to represent the moment when one of the players realises he's been cheated at cards and draws his gun to threaten the robot that he's playing against. In this way I can show the aggressiveness of the regular customers that frequent these gambling dens, and introduce an element of storytelling and tension to the scene.

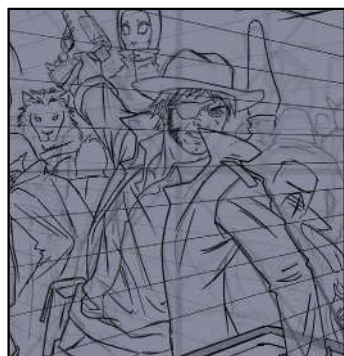


The scene is chock full of characters and is a bit confused, and that's exactly what I was hoping to create!

When painting a complex, character-led scene, I'll plan it out beforehand. This gives me a better idea of what the final result will look like.



Step-by-step: Create tension around the table



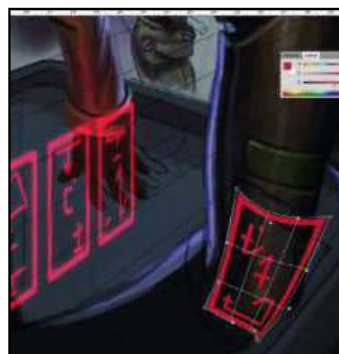
- 1 I put the main character in the middle of the image and draw him in the act of pulling out his gun. I work on his angry expression. To help support his sense of character I draw him wearing a cowboy hat and a full-length coat that's taken straight out of a film noir. I give him a pirate's eye patch, just to ensure that his scoundrel nature is clear to the viewer!



- 2 Taking cues from the animal kingdom I draw other players in the gambling den, varying their costumes, heights, weights and physical features. Here and there I draw aliens belonging to the same race. I pay attention to their body language. Some turn toward the angry protagonist, others look down, others ignore him. Who knows how many fights occur in a place like this!



- 3 To create the smoky atmosphere I use a cold main light coming from the right hand side. The light blue is perfect for science fiction art, and enables me to bring out the scoundrel who's dressed in a dark warm brown. I paint the metal walls of the room and use rough textured brushes to accentuate the dirty look. With an orange colour I also add areas of rust.



- 4 When I finish painting characters, I start with the playing cards. I paint them as a hologram that cast a reddish light. They won't feature the designs of traditional playing cards; instead, I sketch on them some signs that give the idea of an alien script. I don't want the chips to be round and look like Earth currency, so I give them a rectangular shape with a bar code on them.

Question

What's the secret to painting the 'used universe' look from Star Wars?

Jess Cordingly, England

The key to create a believable spaceship is to show that it's in regular use and seen a lot of action. You can achieve this by giving it a worn look.



Answer

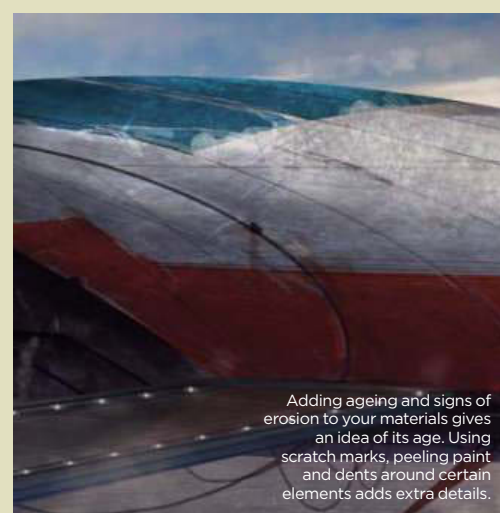
Mark replies



The easiest way to achieve the used universe look is to avoid depicting shiny surfaces and materials. The key is to use the same modern and futuristic shape language, while painting weathered and aged materials. You also have to create a little personal story for these objects.

I would recommend studying how various materials look in real life, to understand how to paint them. Usually you can find more

scratches and dents around the edges of the objects for example, because that's where they come into contact with other objects. Study the appearance of rust stains, how paint becomes aged on top of a metal surface – and why. If you're really serious, visiting a scrap yard and studying all the different worn materials that have been disposed of by their previous owners – plastics, metals and woods – can be an invaluable experience.



Step-by-step: Paint materials with a sense of history



1 First I create my two-point perspective grid to support my drawing, and quickly block in the silhouette of my ship based on a rough sketch. I imagine that this is a fast cargo ship, designed for carrying goods around the planet, so I lay down a simple, aerodynamic shape.



2 After changing the shape of my ship I add details. I try to find a balance between larger shapes and smaller, more complex elements. You can enhance the realism of your piece by breaking up the bigger surfaces with small details, such as the lines of the panelling, and medium-sized shapes like the paint scheme.



3 Now I add the ageing and weathering to all the materials on display. I always try to create a little story in my head and imagine what the ship has been gone through. Try to vary the ageing by using different distressing techniques on the materials, such as rust, dust, dirt, scratches, dents and peeling paint.

Question

What's the key to achieving the Star Wars design aesthetic?

Simon Newry, Australia

Answer

Tony replies



When creating anything for the Star Wars universe, there are a few thoughts to consider. For one thing, the visual aesthetic has changed somewhat over the years. The original trilogy, the prequel trilogy, and the video games (I'm mostly thinking about The Old Republic here) each have their own specific look, but there is a thread of Star Warsiness (that's actually a technical term) that runs through them all. Here I've drawn a spread of bounty hunting equipment as an example of the shapes and textures of a galaxy far, far away.

When starting off, there are two main approaches I use. If the object has some kind of real-world counterpart, such as hand guns for blasters, or axes for vibro-axes), try mixing and matching parts with thumbnail drawings – much like the way a prop creator kit-bashes construction models of aeroplanes, cars and ships.



In a galaxy far far away, a bounty hunter must be able to handle rancors and Jedi alike. These items will help.

In the second image I've combined several pieces of real-world guns to create something that feels unique, a bit otherworldly, and yet still recognisable as a projectile weapon. Try adding a few futuristic shapes to your silhouettes and voilà! You're on the road to Star Warsiness.

My second approach is for when you want to design something that looks unlike anything from our world. Take space ships, for example. Boba Fett's Slave I and the Millennium Falcon are based on a radar dish and hamburger (with olive toothpicked to the side) respectively, which should give you some idea of how far you can take things. Use inspiration from the objects around you and then imagine how something with that particular silhouette would function as a vehicle.



For creating something unique, I draw thumbnail silhouettes before fleshing out the design.

Artist's secret

DESCRIBE – THEN DRAW!

When designing a prop it's best to start off with adjectives that describe the feeling you'd like the item to convey. So for a blaster being carried by a bounty hunter, I'd label it with words such as rugged, weathered and dangerous.



When you're all done putting together the interior of your ship, take some time to make things look like they've been thoroughly used.

Question

Help me design a cockpit of a small spaceship

Corey Martins, US



Answer

Tony replies



The original and prequel trilogies have a very different visual feel, and that's only partly due to the decades between them. More importantly, the two stories they tell are different. Episodes IV-VI are all about desolate planets, primitive peoples and a struggling rebellion. As such, the ships from those movies tend to look like they've been maintained on a tight budget. Episodes I-III, on the other hand, take place largely on advanced worlds, often in the midst of royalty. These ships are

more likely to be slick, polished machines kept in pristine condition.

It's worth noting that the original X-wing cockpits look more like old fighter planes than modern jets. The films' ships interiors all have far fewer buttons, lights and gauges than your average 747. In contrast, real-life planes have instrument panels busier than a shopping mall on Christmas Eve. It could be the advanced technology, the astromech droid, or just the fact that it's more visually appealing, but I've yet to see a ship in a Star Wars product that has so many instruments.

Question

What tips do you have for painting a film baddie?

Charlie Reddy, England

Answer

John replies



There are an infinite number of ways to portray a villain, but in the case of Star Wars, there are certain

conventions that are upheld. For instance, Sith Lords usually wield red lightsabers, and generally wear red and black outfits. Clutching hands radiating Force lighting are a typical visual anchor. Prosthetic limbs are also common, as they reflect the relentless ambition of an unstoppable character who doesn't even let the destruction of their physical body hold them back.

A cool colour palette dominates the look of Imperial troops' uniforms and equipment. There are exceptions, but Imperial officers are known for their cold, mechanical obedience. It's probably no coincidence that their uniforms are similar in colour to the 'feldgrau' of the Nazis from World War II, and their hats have a similar shape to those of Imperial Japanese officers.

If you look at classic villains (especially Disney), many of them are characterised by sharp features, downward-tilting eyebrows, narrow eyes surrounded by dark circles, and smug expressions. Their smiles aren't reflected in their eyes. It's easy to portray the bad guy as a fang-toothed monster, but I've always thought humanoid villains are the scariest because they reflect mankind's capacity for evil.



Sith Lords are consumed by a lust for power, and this should be reflected in their grim countenances. Painting dark circles around the eyes can help.

I like my villains to have a cold, intelligent look to them. Sharp facial features, a hooked nose and thin lips are a great starting place.

Artist's secret

GET SOME OLD REFERENCE
If you're having trouble figuring out how you want your villain to look, 19th-century photographs are a delightful source of inspiration. Mix and match noses, eyes, chins, and other features for endless combinations. It's a great warm-up exercise, too.

Step-by-step: Apply form over function



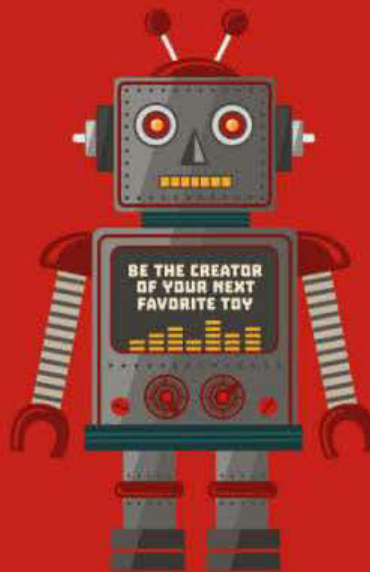
1 Like most of my art, I start off with small value thumbnails to figure out my main structure first. Working from a list of descriptive words, I play around with shapes against a black background (because we already know it's going to be in space), and when something captures the story I'm going for and has that Star Warsiness, I know I can move on.



2 Now it's time to figure out your instruments. We'll need a large monitor for the main radar, a screen for the targeting computers, and some kind of control device. Other than that, it's really form over function. Things like an ejection pull-chord help convey that this is a real ship, but when it comes to gauges it's just a case of what feels right for the narrative.



3 Now that everything is in place, it's time to turn on (and off) some lights. Anything that's illuminated becomes a focal point for your viewer, and heavily influences the rhythm of your piece. Focus on avoiding boring areas where all the lights are all turned on, and keep things balanced enough to not draw attention where it isn't wanted.



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Question

Please show me how to create a Star Wars-inspired environment

Edith Waters, Scotland



Answer

Bram replies



An important thing I always consider when starting a new illustration is the overall composition. It helps to make up your mind up front about where the big shapes in your image will go. Adding building structures and an Imperial shuttle to a mountain ridge can significantly change your composition, so be aware of the traps you can get caught in,

and keep a close eye to how the image changes when you start introducing new shapes to your artwork.

It can save you time if you work with a 3D program such as Blender or Modo, in which you can create a backdrop of your mountain ridge and then quickly block out the big shapes of your structures in front of it. That way you have maximum control over the scale and placement of each

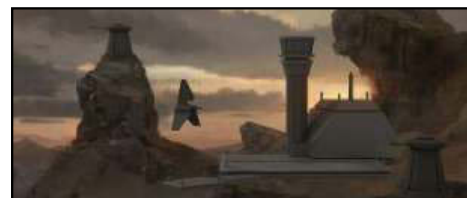
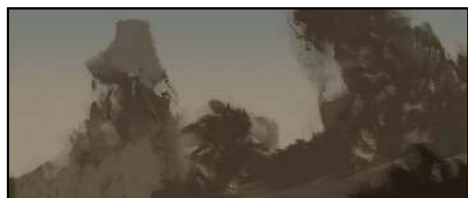
3D programs can help when you need to add structures to an existing image or painting. Simply add your image as a backdrop and start building in front of it.

individual part. Furthermore, it becomes quick and easy to duplicate and move parts around to build up your image. I see it like a big puzzle, and when everything falls into place I sort of feel it 'click'.

Afterwards, I drag my renders into Photoshop, ready for painting. If you've set up your camera in your 3D program correctly, then the structures should fit into your mountain ridge perfectly.

Step-by-step: Let shapes guide your composition

- 1 When starting a new painting, make an effort to focus on the big shapes and how they relate to each other. When shapes recede into the distance they become lighter, so try to place layers of shapes on top of each other to give your scene a sense of distance.
- 2 Once I'm satisfied with the composition I start blocking out the structures in 3D. After that I drag and drop them into Photoshop, and try to separate the buildings according to the layer of rock they're placed upon. This makes it easier to add details to them later on.
- 3 Finally, I focus on the lighting and colour scheme, and start to detail everything. By using a large Soft brush on an Overlay layer you can quickly bathe an image in light and make a certain area feel especially warm or cold. All that's left now is to add little lights and we're done!



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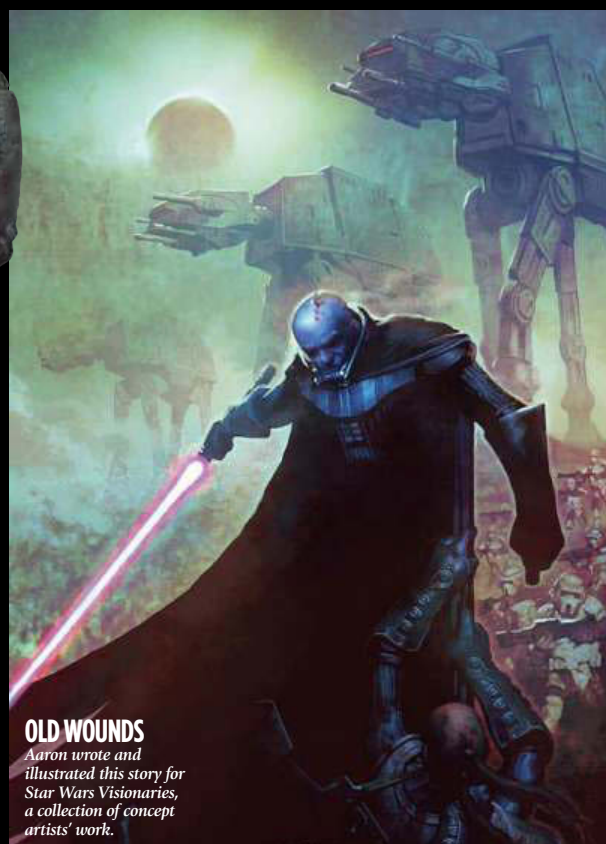


LORDS OF THE SITH
Cover art for the book by
Paul S Kemp, one of the
first entries in the new
canon begun by Disney.





HAMMERHEAD
Concept art for
Maccus in *Pirates of
the Caribbean: Dead
Man's Chest*.



OLD WOUNDS
Aaron wrote and
illustrated this story for
Star Wars Visionaries,
a collection of concept
artists' work.

The Art of AARON MCBRIDE

From a sci-fi loving child to becoming a Star Wars concept artist, Aaron's story is a dream come true, reveals **Ed Ricketts**



Aaron McBride may now be a world-renowned art director and concept artist for films such as *Noah*, *Revenge of the Sith* and *Iron*

Man, but he owes some of his success to his wife – and a certain snack food.

At the time he was a concept artist at ILM – where Aaron still works – and had been assigned to produce some designs for first *Pirates of the Caribbean* film. “One of the challenges was coming up with a look for the decomposing, cursed zombie crew,” he says. “The director, Gore Verbinski, said ‘I don’t want these to be bloody zombies – I don’t want them to be just skeletons. They need to look alive but decomposing. They can’t look like a fresh kill.’”

“So I had just taken a train trip across country and my wife had packed me some

snacks for the journey. One of the things she packed was Turkey Jerky. It looks like human skin; it’s basically dried, desiccated flesh. I spent three or four days on the train looking at that stuff...”

Thus, when the art department asked him casually enough if he could just work up a concept for one of the skeletons as part of his two-day gig on the film, something clicked. “There was a supermarket down the street and I said ‘Do you know what, I’m going to go buy some Turkey Jerky. I’ll be right back.’”

Long story short, Aaron ended up being art director for the film. “It was a bit of a leap at the time. It was kind of intimidating – especially because the supervisor of the show was John Knoll, who invented Photoshop, and a lot of the concepts I was doing were in Photoshop. So it was a little daunting doing concepts for the guy who invented the program!” ➔



DAVY JONES
The tentacle-bearded
baddie of *Pirates of
the Caribbean: Dead
Man's Chest*.



DEAD TREES

"Keep your eyes shut. You won't want to remember this to anyone... least of all yourself," is how Aaron cryptically describes this scene from *Tónaidhe*.

“The Avengers was a lot of fun – I got to design the Leviathan that the Hulk punches”



➔ Aaron says he learnt a lot, though, about what an art director actually does – turns out it's much more than just being in charge of design. It involves staying with the project through production, sitting in dailies with the animation supervisor and other CG artists, offering suggestions as to how the shots have turned out. "It's making sure the aesthetics stay faithful to what the director and the production designer want for their film."

That was just one of the many stages on the journey of the lad who grew up in Mystic, Connecticut: a pretty remote place that couldn't really fulfil young Aaron's

thirst for movie magic. "There wasn't much access there. There was maybe just one comic book store you had to drive quite a ways to. I grew up pre-internet, pre-Facebook, so you didn't really see a lot of concept art for movies. The only thing that was out there was the Art of Star Wars stuff. That really got me going, but I was wondering how to do that. It seemed so far away from where I was growing up and the academic subjects I was doing."

MAN ON A MISSION

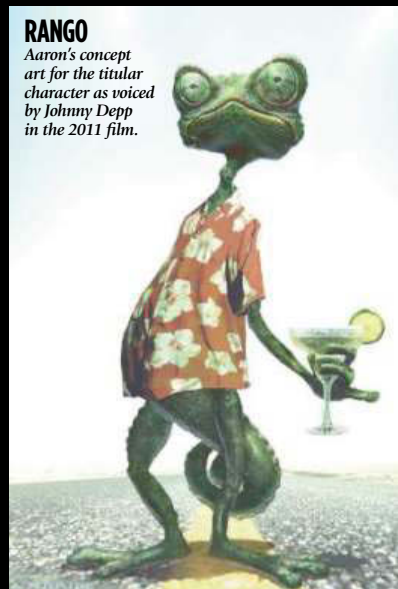
But Aaron was tenacious, and while studying at school he made it his mission to discover as much about this tantalising world as possible. "I would try to find out where the artists that I liked went to school, or where the directors that I liked studied. And so I applied to go to a lot of those schools, but they were mostly film schools and I realised what I liked most was drawing and painting, so I ended up going to Rhode Island School of Design."

Another, earlier, leap – from production assistant to concept artist – came on the film that everyone in the design industry wanted to work on: *Star Wars Episode 1*. "I was working a lot for David Nakabayashi and on Episode I he would throw me little artistic assignments, to do after hours," Aaron says. "Here's a storyboard for Episode I. Here's a matte painting. Do a concept for this."

"So it was funny: because I was a production assistant, the pressure wasn't on. The pressure was on me to impress him,

RANGO

Aaron's concept art for the titular character as voiced by Johnny Depp in the 2011 film.



AARON MCBRIDE

VITAL STATISTICS

"I grew up pre-internet, pre-Facebook..."

Age: 41.

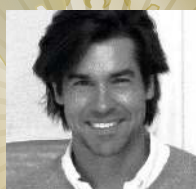
Location: California, US.

Favourite artists:

Travis Charest, Ilya Repin, David Fincher and Michael Mann.

Who's inspired you the most: My

parents. My dad always said, "If you want to be an artist,



you're going to work at it as hard as your sister works in medical school studying to be a doctor."

Favourite Star Wars character: I always liked Uncle Owen.

Website:

<http://ifxm.ag/a-mcbride>

ARTIST TIP

MAKE TIME SAVINGS BY PICKING YOUR BATTLES

"When you're working against a deadline, you need to be more efficient. For instance, don't kill yourself trying to do every little detail in 3D for something you can render out or paint in Photoshop."



AVENGERS

Concept art for the Hulk's face-off against the Chitauri Leviathan in the 2012 blockbuster *The Avengers*.

but he'd give me lower priority stuff in case it didn't work out."

Since then he's worked on a mightily impressive range of films: *Minority Report*, *Rango*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, many more. "The *Avengers* was a lot of fun – I got to design the Leviathan that the Hulk punches," he enthuses. "I was always a huge fan of the Hulk. When I was young my mom would only allow me to watch an hour of TV a week, so I used that hour every week to watch the Lou Ferrigno Hulk TV show."

Then, of course, there is his beloved *Star Wars*. Aaron worked on Episodes I to III, and while he's reluctant to talk about the critical reaction they received at the ➔



TÓRAIDHE

One of the many images from Aaron's long-awaited graphic novel, which he's also writing.

ARTIST TIP

DIRECT THE VIEWER'S EYES WITH CLEVER DETAILING

"I think a lot of being prolific is being a good editor and knowing where to put your detail and where the audience is not going to look. Because if you have a lot of details everywhere, the audience probably doesn't want to see that."



➤ time, he's in no doubt about how much he learnt and what enormous fun it was.

"Growing up, I had heard all these stories of what people thought of the way Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader had fought. It was explained in interviews about how Vader had fallen into a volcano or he had been burnt somehow. That's why he looked as he did under the black armour. When you're kids that's almost like heresy. You kind of theorise with your

TWILIGHT COMPANY

Aaron painted the cover art for *Twilight Company*, a novel by Alexander Freed, inspired by EA's hugely anticipated *Star Wars Battlefront* game.

friends and you're not quite sure what's canon and what's not.

"I was one of the art directors on the battle on Mustafar, which was the lava planet in *Revenge of the Sith*. So I was really excited to work on that: 'Oh, this is the scene everyone has been talking about!' It was a thrill; I got to work with a lot of the guys in the model shop who had worked on the original trilogy, including Steve Gawley and Lorne Peterson. He sculpted the asteroid that the *Millennium Falcon* hides on in *Empire*!"

So he's busy... but has he also been working on *Star Wars* Episode VII and beyond? Possibly, possibly not; understandably, Disney (now owners of ILM) is strictly controlling the amount of information it releases about the new films before their release. Doubtless we'll get to see concept art and other designs in due course, but don't hold your breath.

ARTIST TURNS WRITER

For the moment, and outside of his film and commercial work, Aaron has another labour of love in gestation: his graphic novel, *Tōraidhe*. As you might expect, this is a gloriously illustrated dark sci-fi tale, with every page looking like a breathtaking piece of concept art. Aaron wrote the story

“ I got to work with a lot of the guys from the original trilogy ”

and dialogue himself, and the current plan is to get the first issue out in early 2016.

"I realised early on that I had to build things in CG if I wanted to reuse them over and over again," he says of the production process. "The first pieces I did traditionally: sketched them out, then scanned them into a computer and coloured in Photoshop. But I was so nitpicky about every little thing that I realised if I needed to draw these over and over again I'd be dead in the ground before I ever get anything done. So that's why I worked with CG, because of the repetition."

Aaron's star-bound trajectory continues, then, and he couldn't be happier. "Looking back into it now, if you don't know how to get into a career, then a good, intense work ethic will get you anywhere," he believes. "And it's fun to have your own world to play in with my graphic novel. I can create this world and play with it for story ideas. I'm sort of doing my dream right now." ●

THE BENEFITS OF MEETING PEOPLE

Aaron believes that escaping from the busy studio environment once in a while is always a good idea

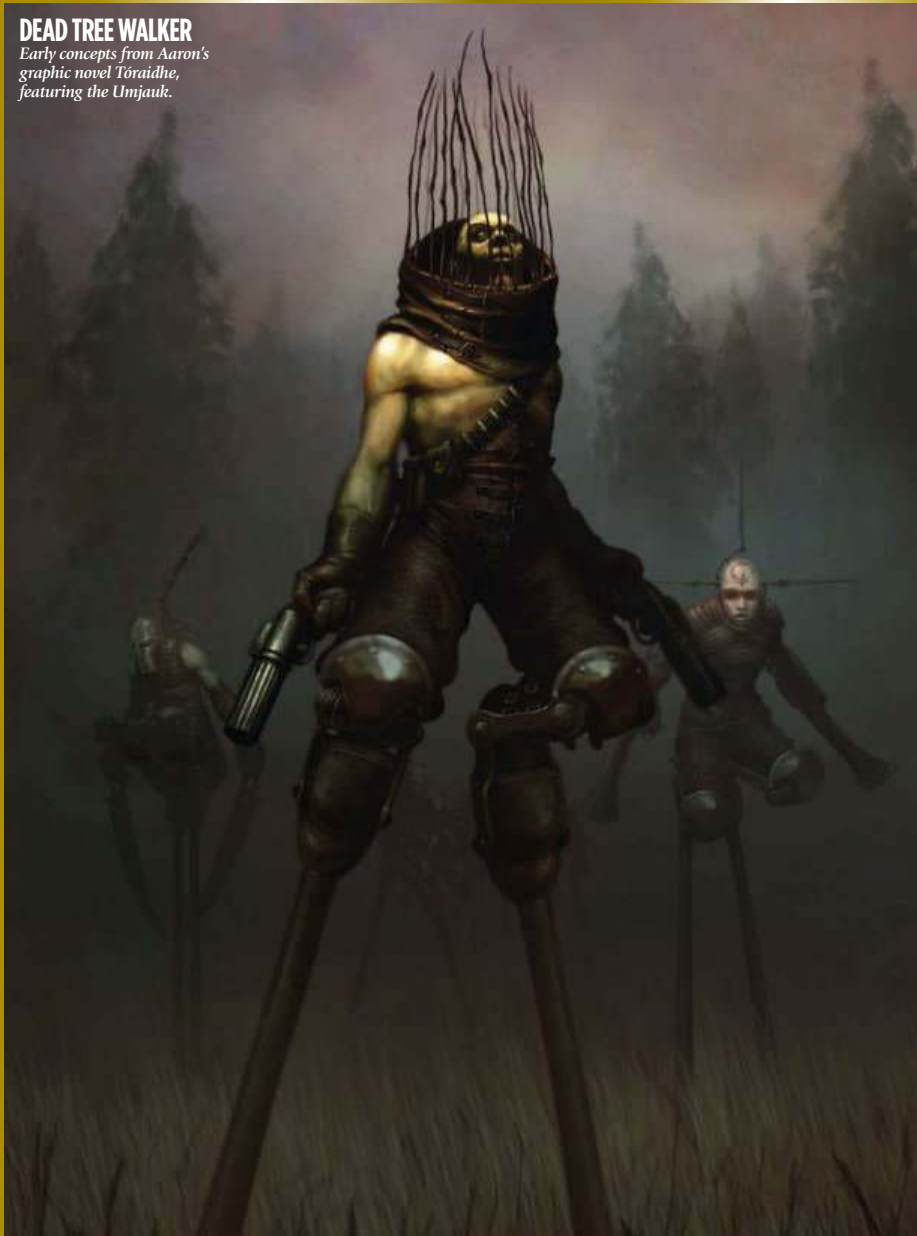
Aaron says he's fortunate to work in a studio atmosphere with other artists at ILM, but he still enjoys going to festivals and shows to catch up with his peers. And even now, he sometimes finds himself starstruck when meeting fellow artists in the flesh.

"I mean, you follow a lot of people on Facebook, and you sort of get to know their work through publications like *ImagineFX*... then you see them for the first time and it's sort of like an odd celebrity thing where you recognise them and go 'I know you!' and then I realise I don't know you!" he laughs.

"It's wonderful to see someone in person for the first time. Raphael Lacoste, for instance - I'm a big fan. I'm not a huge gamer but I love the aesthetic of *Assassins Creed*, so it was really kind of cool when I met him at a show last year and I said 'Hey, I'm a really big fan of your stuff.' I realised we'd never met!"

DEAD TREE WALKER

Early concepts from Aaron's graphic novel *Tóraidhe*, featuring the Umjauk.



© Marvel/Disney

IRON MAN

Concept art for the design of Iron Man's elaborate suit-assembling machine, as seen in the first two films.



MID-AIR ENCOUNTER

More from Aaron's *Tóraidhe*, which he describes as "a period story in the spirit of *Last of the Mohicans* and *The Guns of Navarone*."

THE ART OF TERESE NIELSEN

From rural dreaming to trading-card queen, Terese's rich, textured work is unmistakable. **Jem Roberts** follows the artist through her fantastical adventures



Terese Nielsen is an immediately recognisable name in fantasy art. She's a painter and mixed-media experimenter at the top of her fields – notably, trading card artwork for the likes of Magic: The Gathering and Harry Potter, and of course Star Wars art. Given the star-skipping theme of this issue, it's

irresistible to draw comparisons between young Terese, and another ambitious young farmhand on a planet far, far away...

"I'm from Aurora," Terese says, "a teeny-tiny farming town. We didn't have computers or cell phones, and video games were barely beginning to happen, so there wasn't anything to do! I would stay home and draw. I wasn't ever bored, but had a lot of time to learn how to do stuff without being distracted by a million things, like

today. Growing up on a farm, you see the seasons turning."

Sharing an upbringing with a twin and older brother (fellow fantasy artist Ron Spencer), creativity ran in the family. "We have a strain of it going on there – my mom took art classes in college early on, but then got married and did the stay-at-home mom thing. But she was a cultured lady. ➔



DESCENDANTS' PATH

A 2012 Magic: The Gathering illustration from the set Avacyn Restored. "Probably one of my most personal and meaningful M:tG pieces. It features portraits of my own family history."



© 2013 Wizards of the Coast

BLAST OF GENIUS

*"I like Ral Zarek's
confident, cocky smirk –
and hair. But I don't
think he's trustworthy
dating material."*

Christmas 2015

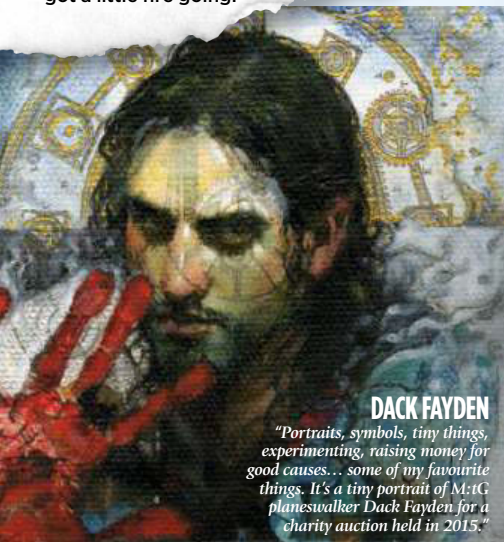
ImagineFX



ARTIST TIP

BE INSPIRED

"I have this nook in my studio, my little library, and I like to sit there and pull out different books and be inspired. I like to just let a lot of influences seep in to what I do. And then I'll go, 'All right, let's try this!' I'm excited and I've got a little fire going."



DACK FAYDEN

"Portraits, symbols, tiny things, experimenting, raising money for good causes... some of my favourite things. It's a tiny portrait of MtG planeswalker Dack Fayden for a charity auction held in 2015."



© 2010 Wizards of the Coast

➤ "My parents were both cool about supporting any kind of passion we had. Out on the farm, we didn't have art classes to go to, or even that many books, but all of us – me and my brothers – all three of us would sit around and draw."

Studying art at college in Idaho, and then Pasadena, where she graduated with distinction, gave her a crucial escape from the farm, setting her on the right track. "Once qualified, you have the basics to springboard into any direction you want, with a solid grounding in all the core principals that matter," she says.

But Terese was, above all, inspired by the artists whose work she hungrily consumed from the early days. "My first art crush was

totally Boris Vallejo," she reveals. "I just loved the way he painted, and still do – the musculature and the vibrant colour, his skin tones – I just couldn't imagine that was possible to do with a paintbrush. I like Frank Frazetta, but some of the ways he depicted women stuck in my craw. I remember even as a young girl, feeling

▀▀ I love the way Vallejo painted – the musculature, the vibrant colour, the skin tones ▀▀

SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES

"The challenge to symbolically, in an Escher-like tessellation, depict the transformation of war and death to new life and growing things, was an honour and a tremendous challenge."

Boris' work was much more empowering with the type of women he painted. I wanted to relate to those women."

Her gender made breaking into any industry an extra challenge, but in the fantasy field where unrealistic depictions of the female form are infamous, there was a particular desire to break through and make some changes.

Even today, she feels, negative depictions of women remain rife. "You still see it. Maybe it's just always gonna be there, in fantasy, because some people enjoy seeing that, but it doesn't appeal to me, and probably a lot of other women. Definitely there's far more options now."

FROM THE RUINS

Marvel provided the first entry into paying jobs. "My older brother was a huge comic book guy, and I was a pretty big Marvel fan – X-Men, Spider-Man. We got a trading card gig early on, and then moved into comic books and collectibles and it all snowballed from there." But working alongside her then-husband Cliff Nielsen, Terese's ➤



SYDRI, GALVANIC GENIUS

"When I grow up, I want Sydri's powers and her workshop. I bribed my daughter Kristi to model for the photo shoot for this piece. It was great fun rendering her and all the magical elements."

TERESE NIELSEN VITAL STATISTICS

"Frazetta's female depictions stuck in my craw"

Date of Birth

March 1966

Place of Birth

Aurora, Nebraska

Current location

Nevada, US

Favourite artists

Gustav Klimt, Alphonse Mucha, Mark English, Thomas Blackshear, Julie Bell, Brad Kunkle,



Yoann Lossel,

Tran Nguyen

What's your favourite fantasy franchise?

Magic: The Gathering

Career highlight?

Becoming a

part of Magic! They have amazing room for creativity.

© 2013 Wizards of the Coast

LUKE: LEGACY OF THE FORCE

Mean, moody and magnificent: Mark Hamill's cornball hero reveals a darker side under the influence of Terese's paintbrush...



"This was created for Star Wars Miniatures: Legacy of the Force packaging in 2007. They wanted Luke in his black, battle-rebel-commando stealth suit: lightsaber in hand, no helmet, eye contact and an aggressive stance. Frazetta's Tanar of Pellucidar bubbled up in my mind.

I shot photos of a model (in this case me) for basic anatomy, lighting and costuming. From there, a sketch was worked up and approved by the Lucas team. The final art was painted, starting with gouache washes in the background as an underlayer of colour and texture. Acrylic washes were laid in on the figure. After all the white of the paper was covered with general colours, values and texture, and the rest was built up and rendered out in oil. The background was revisited with more glazes of oil and an airbrush was used for the lightsaber glow."

PHOTO REFERENCE

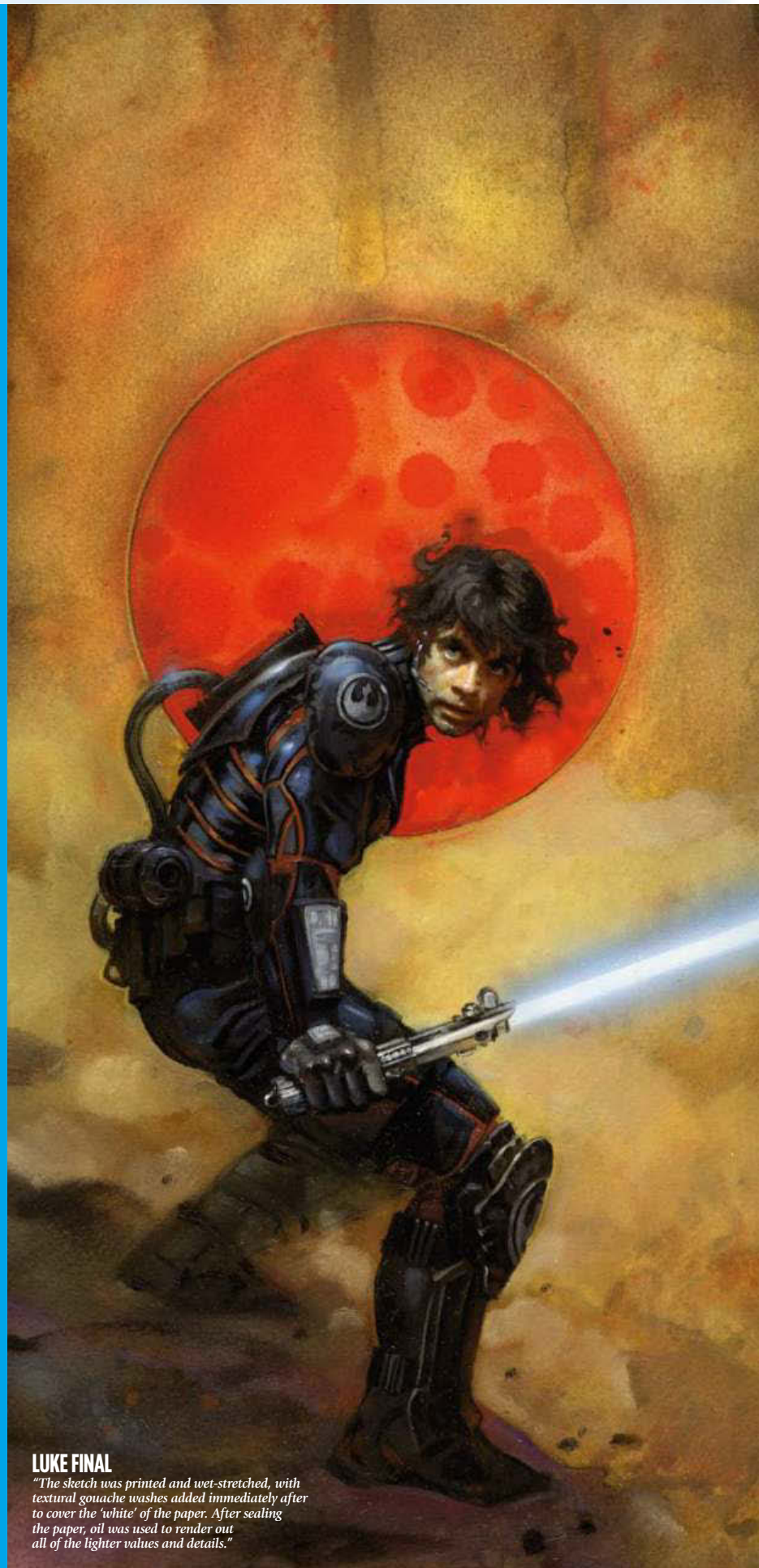
"Here I am, in all my 'Force-d' glory. I had the Hamill face reference, so all I needed was basic pose/lighting/costuming."



LUKE SKETCH

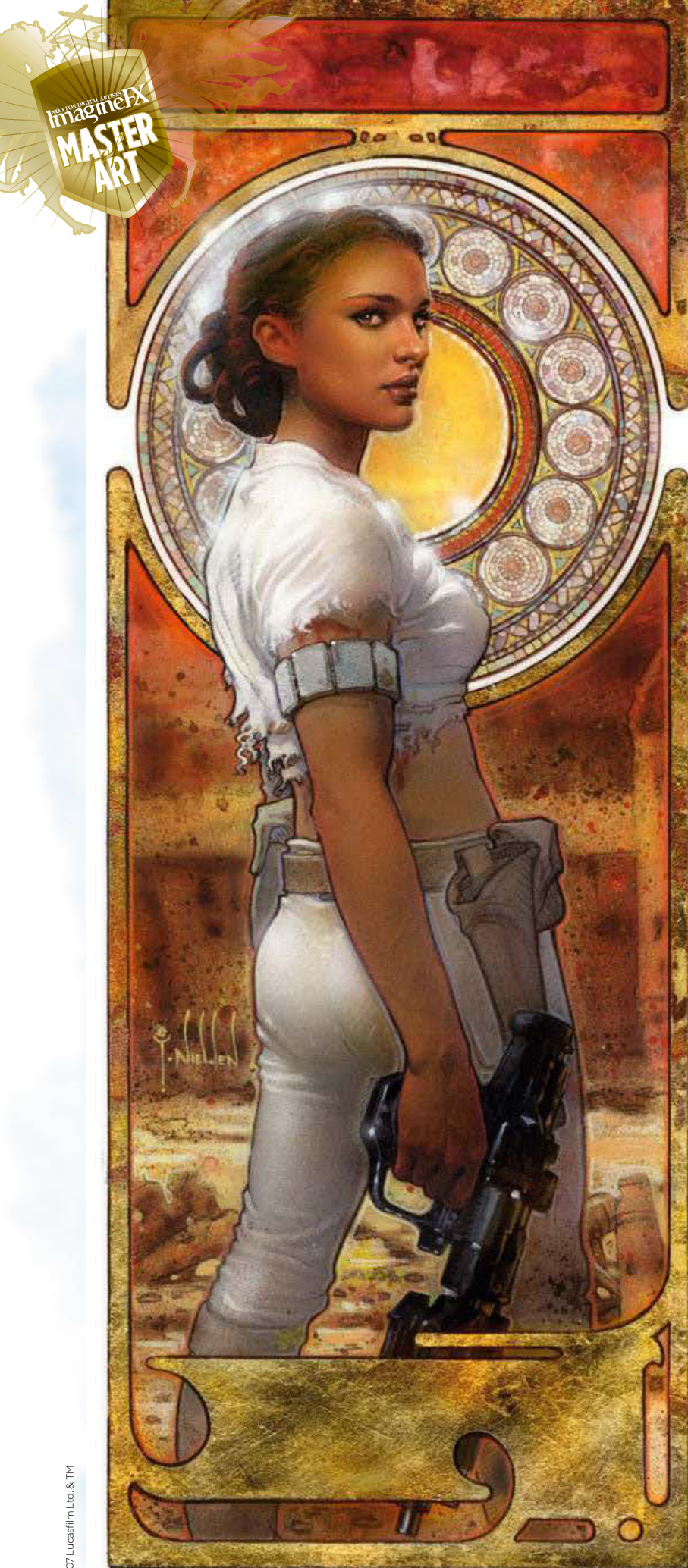
"I was more than thrilled at the opportunity to depict Luke with a more badass feel."

© Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM



LUKE FINAL

"The sketch was printed and wet-stretched, with textural gouache washes added immediately after to cover the 'white' of the paper. After sealing the paper, oil was used to render out all of the lighter values and details."



FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
MASTER ART

© 2007 Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM

LILIANA VESS

Acrylic, coloured pencil, oil.
"An opportunity to paint a powerful female character – always love that! Being asked to sign cosplayers dressed up as Liliana has been an unexpected perk."



© 2009 Wizards of the Coast

PADME AMIDALA: CELEBRATION IV LIMITED PRINT

"A hats-off, deep bow to my greatest inspiration and influence, Alphonse Mucha. His elegant draftsmanship, reasons for making art, rich, symbolic layers will always be part of me."

➡ first real coup came from marshalling the paintbrushes for dystopian offshoot Ruins. Although the darkness of the plot proved a mixed blessing.

"If you're painting something dark and depressing, it's depressing! Ruins was where everything goes wrong for superheroes, an alternate universe where the Hulk gets tumours from the gamma radiation, and they all have psychological breakdowns. Oh my God – it was an awesome story! But super-depressing.

"Despite that, it was a great gig early on in my career – painting pages at breakneck speed, cranking it out and staying on schedule, really intense. Just to make a living, you had to paint real fast, which



ESSENCE WARDEN

"I was asked to reference Randy Gallegos' M:tG Soul Warden illustration, but replace the human cleric with a wise, calm Yavimaya elf. My longtime muse/wife was the perfect model."

© 2007 Wizards of the Coast

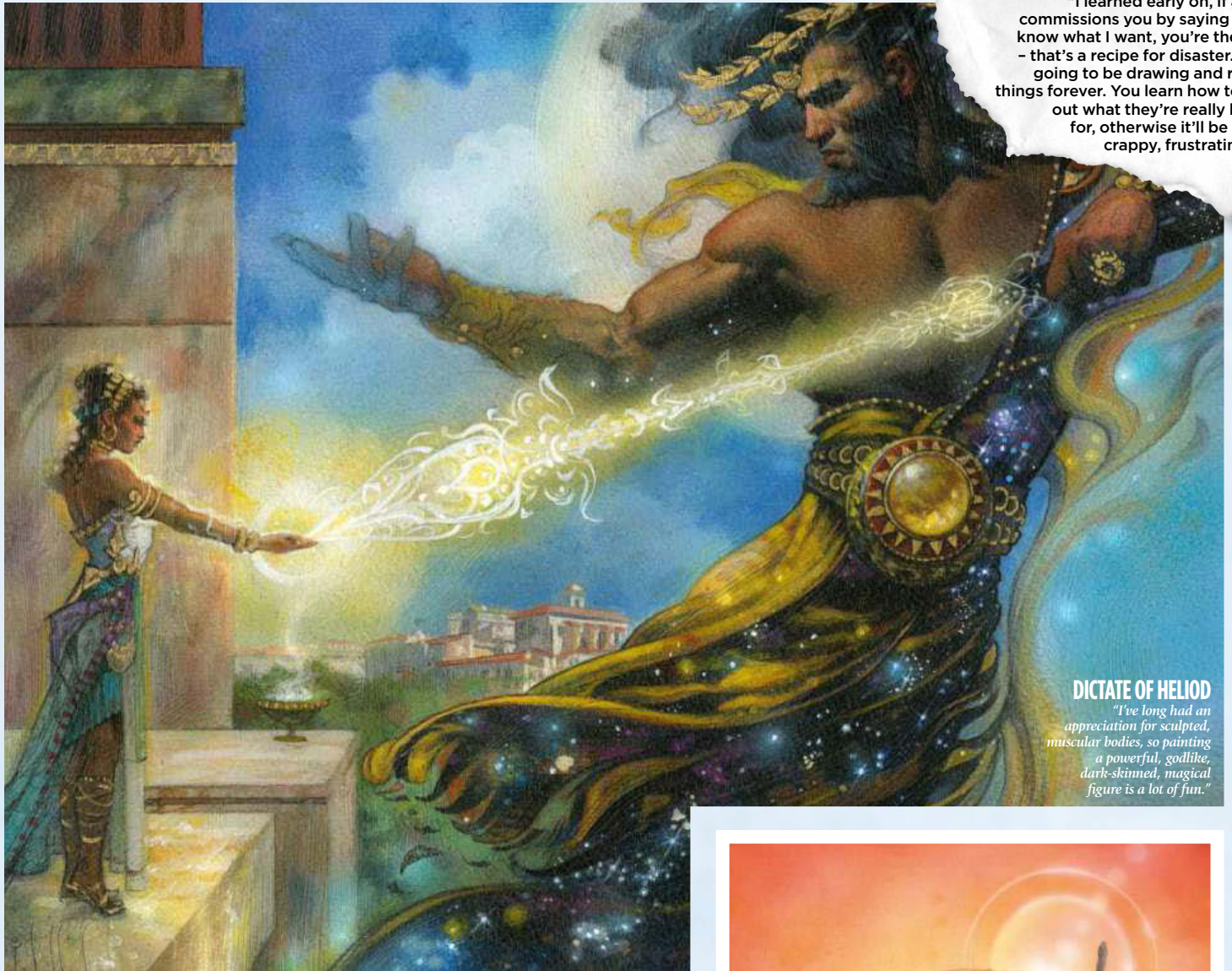
ARTIST TIP

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

"I learned early on, if anyone commissions you by saying 'I don't know what I want, you're the artist' – that's a recipe for disaster. You're going to be drawing and redoing things forever. You learn how to ferret out what they're really looking for, otherwise it'll be a really crappy, frustrating job."

DICTATE OF HELIOD

"I've long had an appreciation for sculpted, muscular bodies, so painting a powerful, godlike, dark-skinned, magical figure is a lot of fun."



© 2014 Wizards of the Coast

▀▀ Painting at breakneck speed, cranking it out and staying on schedule. It was really intense. You had to paint fast ▀▀

wasn't so fun. At some points in my career it really felt like a conveyor belt on my art table. No room for experimentation or risking making a mistake, because it has to be done right now."

A KIND OF MAGIC

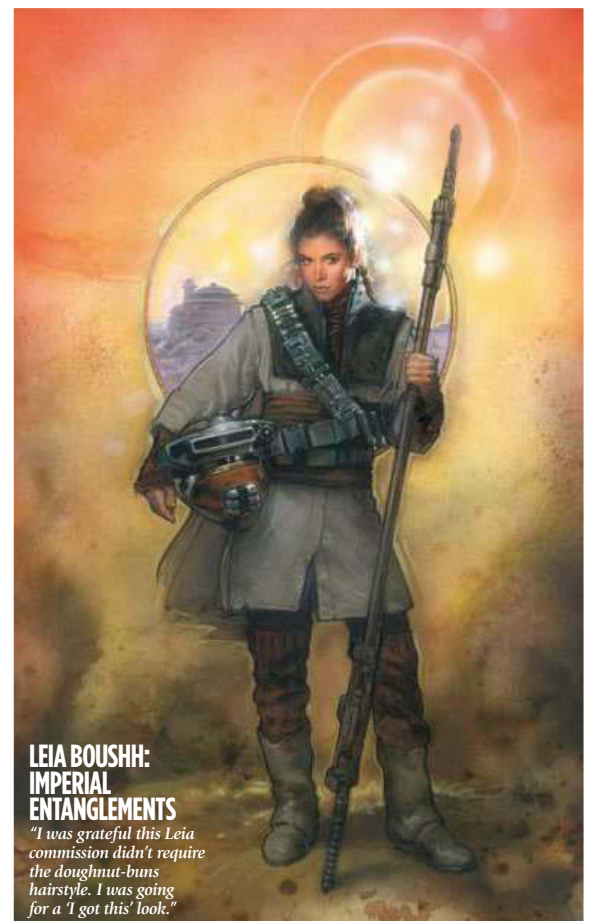
It was Magic: The Gathering that really put Terese on another level, and gave far more scope for her passions: mixed media painting, hiding myriad symbols and odd effects. "Magic has changed a lot over the years," she admits. "It used to be really wide open. It's got more specific with style guides now, but I've never felt restricted by that."

"That's one of the reasons I love Magic – it keeps changing and I never get bored. Also, the fanbase is awesome and huge, and it's done so great with the brand for 20 years. It's a worldwide success and you can do well signing and selling prints and

originals, so just one painting can be maximised a lot of different ways." And when you consider Terese has created some 225 original pieces for Magic, those are some great "side benefits".

Trying out different effects in her painting – throwing in leaves, or hidden meanings – is one of Terese's trademarks. But she admits now that, "I'm not really sure I could explain it, I just love it, like old books and symbols and sacred geometries, somehow it all wants to be in there..."

But she's as on board with digital art as any of her contemporaries, despite her love of the visceral nature of old-fashioned paintwork. "To my mind, digital is just another way of painting. To do a great piece you still need to know what you're doing, so I think it's entirely valid in every way. I just like the physicality of all the mediums and trying new things. Plus, selling original ➔



LEIA BOUSHH: IMPERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

"I was grateful this Leia commission didn't require the doughnut-buns hairstyle. I was going for a 'I got this' look."

© Lucasfilm Ltd & TM

CREATURES OF SPIRIT

"The journey to authentic self-expression can be long and meandering. I've surrendered to my own dreams, where animal totems have engaged my soul for decades."

BASANDRA, BATTLE SERAPH

"If I had to pick an image to represent my brand, Basandra would be it! Dozens of women have told me that it inspires them. There's no higher compliment."



© 2011 Wizards of the Coast

“The fantasy art area is so generous, everyone just loves to share. There’s rarely competitiveness or secrecy”

art is very hot these days! You can’t really compare a print-out to a painting.”

And what about Star Wars? “My very first Star Wars job was early on, like 20 years ago. For Star Wars Galaxy magazine, I was contacted to do a painting of Lando Calrissian. Then Dark Horse Comics asked me to do comic and book covers for them.”

Despite the quality of her work for those mediums, however, a more commercial job took her fancy: “Several years later, I did packaging illustrations for the Star Wars miniatures, which was like 24 different paintings just for those. That was my favourite, because you could just focus on a single character for each design, and get into the mind of that character. That’s the fun part to me.”

Terese has worked with the best: “I remember Donato and I sitting next to each other in Artists’ Alley at Comic-Con for years, and it’s so awesome to see how he’s moulded his career. Then there’s Rebecca Guay and her work, and how it’s evolved and changed, and she’s started this school [Illustration Master Class] that has become a phenomenon.

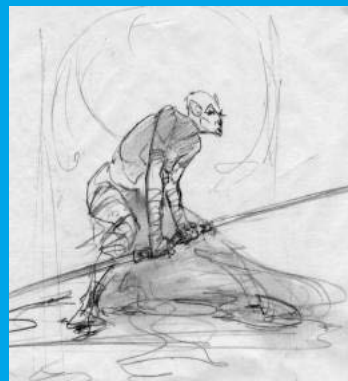
People whose art is amazing, and then they share it, I find inspiring. I feel like the fantasy art area is so generous and thoughtful with young ones coming up and everyone just loves to share. You rarely get a feeling of competitiveness or secrecy.”

But which of her fantasy-art jobs has been her favourite? She laughs: “My favourite fantasy world is probably my life.”

Traditional skills ASAJJ VENTRESS: GALAXY AT WAR

A lesser-known part of the Star Wars universe was a chance to get away from tried stances...

“I’m not up on all of the extended universe Star Wars characters, Asajj Ventress included, but it didn’t take long to figure out she’s a powerful, sinister character. There’s a finite amount of poses for figures with lightsabers, and I’m tired of most of them. A menacing female with two glowing wands provided me with something a little different to play with. I received feedback from the Lucas team that she needed to be more aggressive, with “crossed lightsabers and a sneer”. Reference photos were shot of my wife holding broomsticks, “sneering” in her underwear, but I think I’ll keep those pics to myself!”



1 Sketch poses

“I scrawled out three or four loose gestural poses. I liked several, so in this case (to save time) I ran the loose thumbsies by the art director to see which direction he wanted to go in.”



2 Photo reference

“Photos with dramatic lighting are vital. Fantasy art requires some made-up areas, but let those be the stylistic aspects. Without good reference you end up mucking about in the drawing or painting phase for hours, wondering why it isn’t working and have nothing to check it against.”



3 Time efficient

“From the beginning, RPG and CCG jobs have spoiled me. In general they require far less time when it comes to: reading manuscripts, multiple sketch submissions, colour comps and then final art revisions.”



4 Final painting
"Having worked in several other genres and industries I have a great appreciation for the process I've used here: one sketch, one sketch revision, and at most, a slight revision on the final painting."

Iain McCaig

Entertainment industry veteran Iain still feels the magic of picking up a pencil...

Artist PROFILE

Iain McCaig

COUNTRY: Canada



Iain is an artist and writer, with 35 years of film, game and illustration credits to his name. He's best known for his album cover for

Jethro Tull's *Broadsword and the Beast*, for his contributions to the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks, and for his *Star Wars* designs for Darth Maul and Queen Amidala. He carries Tombow pencils and a hand-cranked pencil sharpener with him everywhere.
www.iainmccaig.blogspot.com

SARAH AND VEKTOR

"Titanfall was a gift of a project: the only brief was to design a rag-tag band of adventurers. Sarah is my nod to *Terminator 2*'s Sarah Connor, a blood relative of *Mad Max*'s Furiosa. I tried to capture the moment just before her inner armour comes down, her eyes betraying a whisper of vulnerability. And Vektor is also a 'yet-to-be-used' character from the game. Thank God for sequels!"

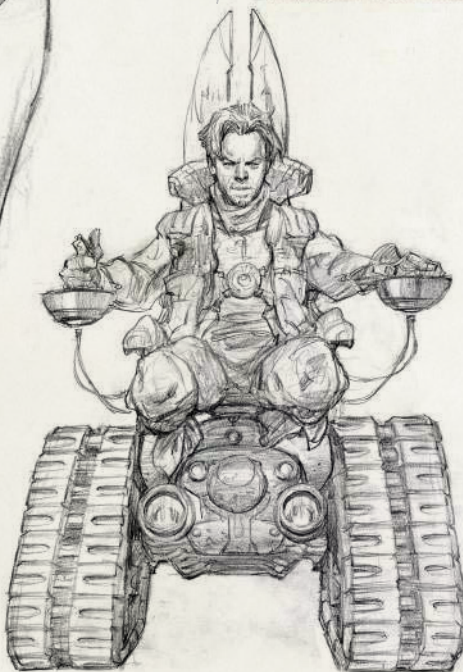


ELLIE

"I've made umpteen attempts to bring Terri Windling's *Sorcerer's Apprentice* to the big screen. In this version, the apprentice is a brawling street rat who flattens opponents with her enchanted fists."



"Titanfall was a gift of a project: the only brief was to design a rag-tag band of adventurers"



INTERVIEW WITH A MONSTER

"A portrait of me on a typical day in my studio, fresh from fighting deadlines and greeting an unexpected visitor."





PELLUCIDAR

"Draw what you love, 'cause passion makes better pictures. What I love best are people, but I've found that dressing them up with claws and wings or little floating droids tends to make them sell better."

Molotov

YODA

"Wendy Froud channelled the essence of faerie into her sculpt of the Jedi Master, and I could happily sit and sketch him all day. One of the world's most perfect designs."



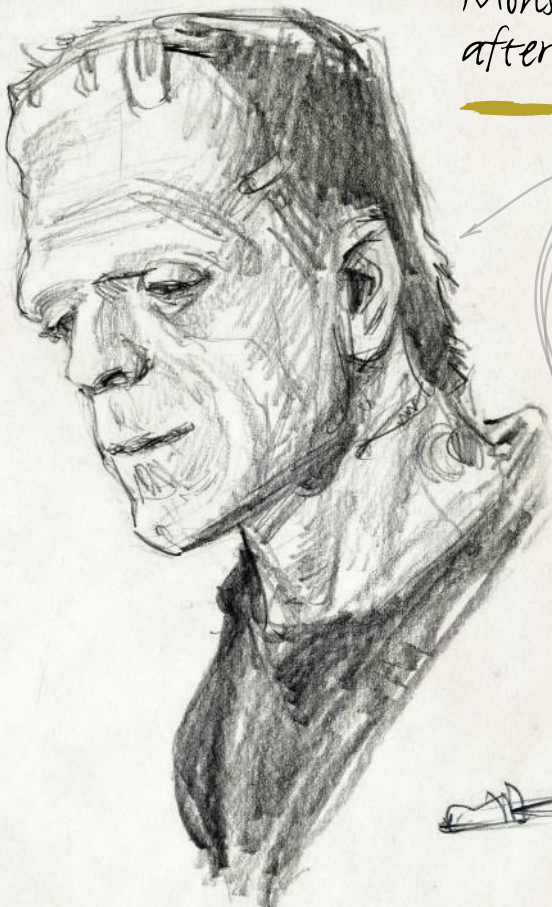
"I started sketching Frankenstein's Monster the second week of school, right after dinosaurs, and never stopped"

HATTER AND HARE

"Reinventing well-illustrated icons like those in Alice in Wonderland is always a challenge. You have to look for yourself in the characters, or search for inspiring models (I found my Mad Hatter in a tea shop near Stonehenge)."

FRANKENSTEIN

"Speaking of perfect designs, Boris Karloff's Frankenstein's Monster takes the cake. The trick is in his expression, the naive child inside his big, square head. I started sketching him the second week of school, right after dinosaurs, and never stopped."



Sketchbook

THE MUSE

"Muses rarely bring inspiration when it's convenient. Often, it's the middle of a movie, or a good night's frolic."

KING KONG

"I'd just watched Johnny Cash's music video Hurt, and something about Cash's expression reminded me of King Kong. Moments later, this sketch tumbled from an 8B Tombow."

CHEF

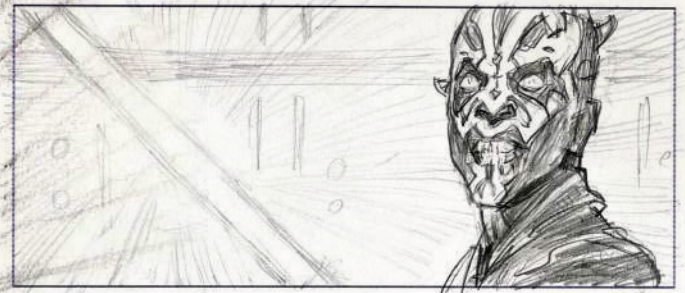
"The first rule of concept design: never fall in love with a drawing. Even Titanfall's Chef eventually hit the cutting board."

"The first rule of concept design: never fall in love with a drawing"



TINKERBELL

"JM Barrie's Tinkerbell was a common sort of faerie, '...gowned in a skeleton leaf, cut low and square, through which her figure could be seen to the best advantage.'"



DARTH MAUL

"Drawing Darth Maul, you have to remember not to overplay him. He's not evil, like Palpatine; he just wants to kick some Jedi ass."

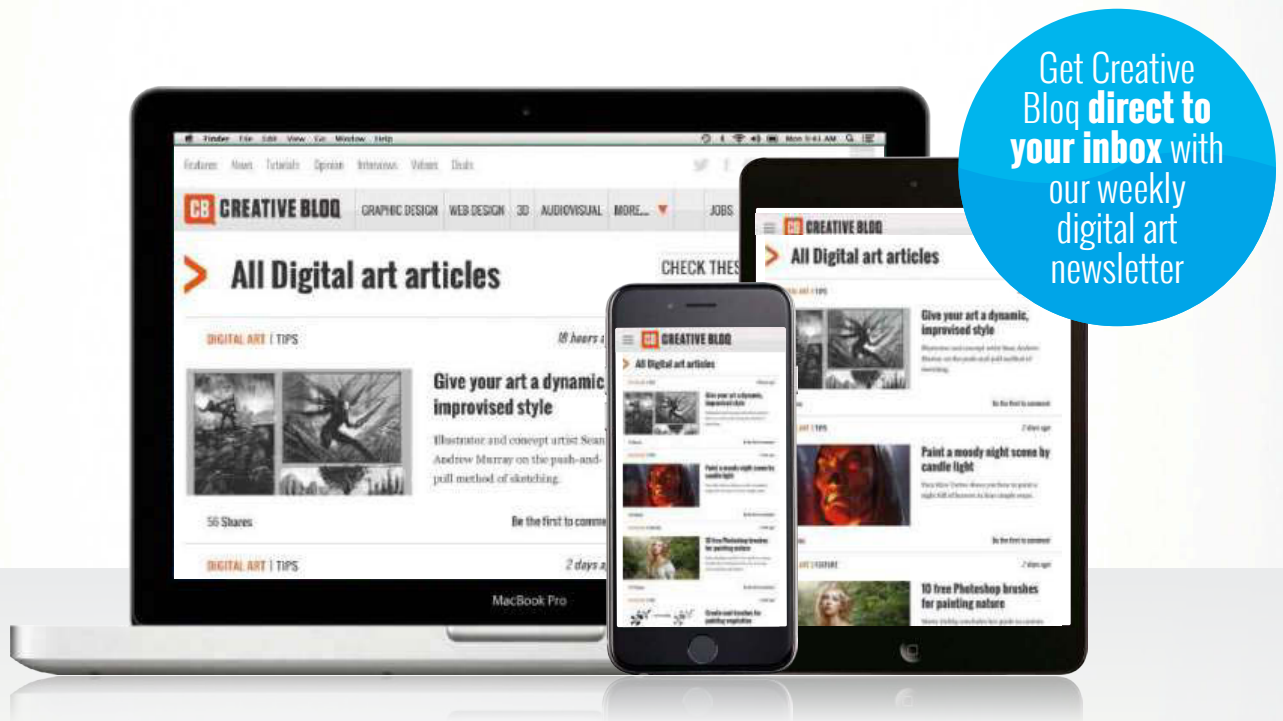
JOHN CARTER

"Good keyframes try to capture a pivotal action or turning point in the scene. Here, John Carter attempts to steal the amulet that will send him back to Earth, but Tars Tarkus catches him in the act."



Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com
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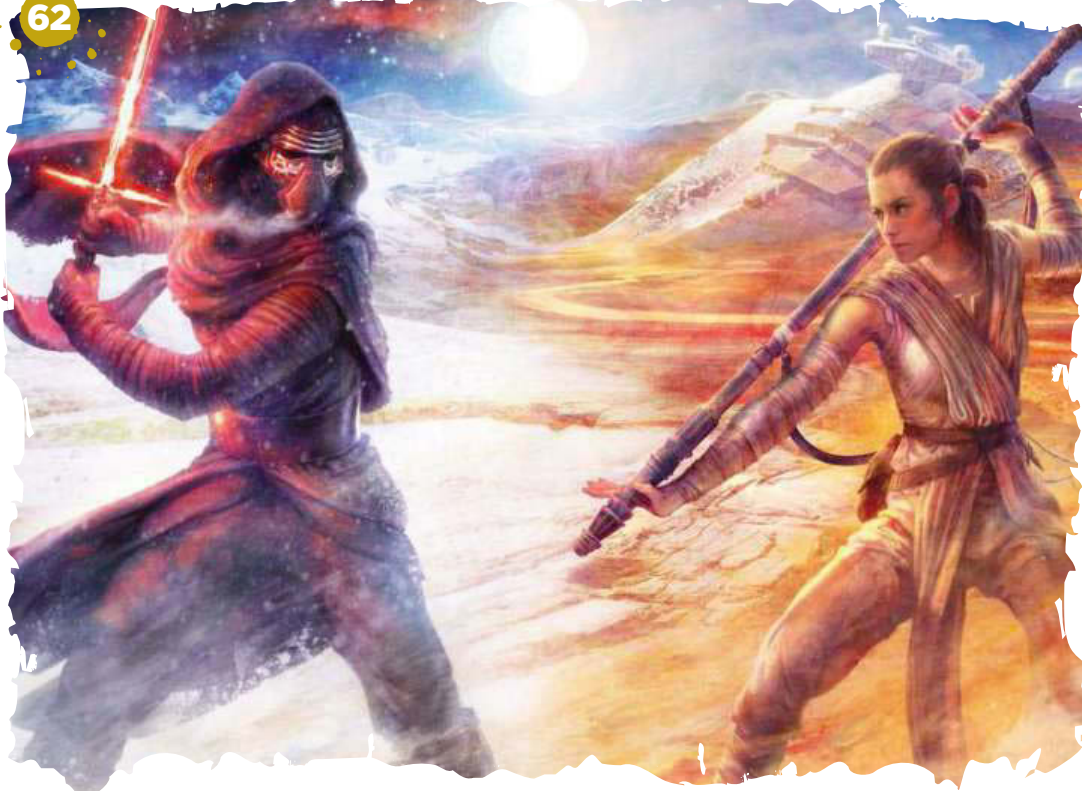
Download each workshop's WIPS, final image and brushes by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists

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62 From photograph to finished art

Andrew Theophilopoulos talks us through creating two key figures from the forthcoming Star Wars film.

66 Develop exciting book cover art

Bruno Wagner reveals how a simple 3D model is the basis for his female character, taken from a book.

68 Easy 3D steps for cinematic impact

Josh Viers clearly conveys an atmospheric Star Wars cinematic moment, which he achieves in part by painting over 3D models.

74 Create innovative mech designs

Brian Sum develops futuristic mech designs through a series of art principles and Photoshop techniques.

81 Go beyond the layer basics

Learn about Krita Desktop's advanced layer features and how to use them, with Katarzyna Oleska.

82 Paint Star Wars concept artwork

Feng Zhu taps into his extensive film pipeline experience to create a production painting for a Star Wars project.

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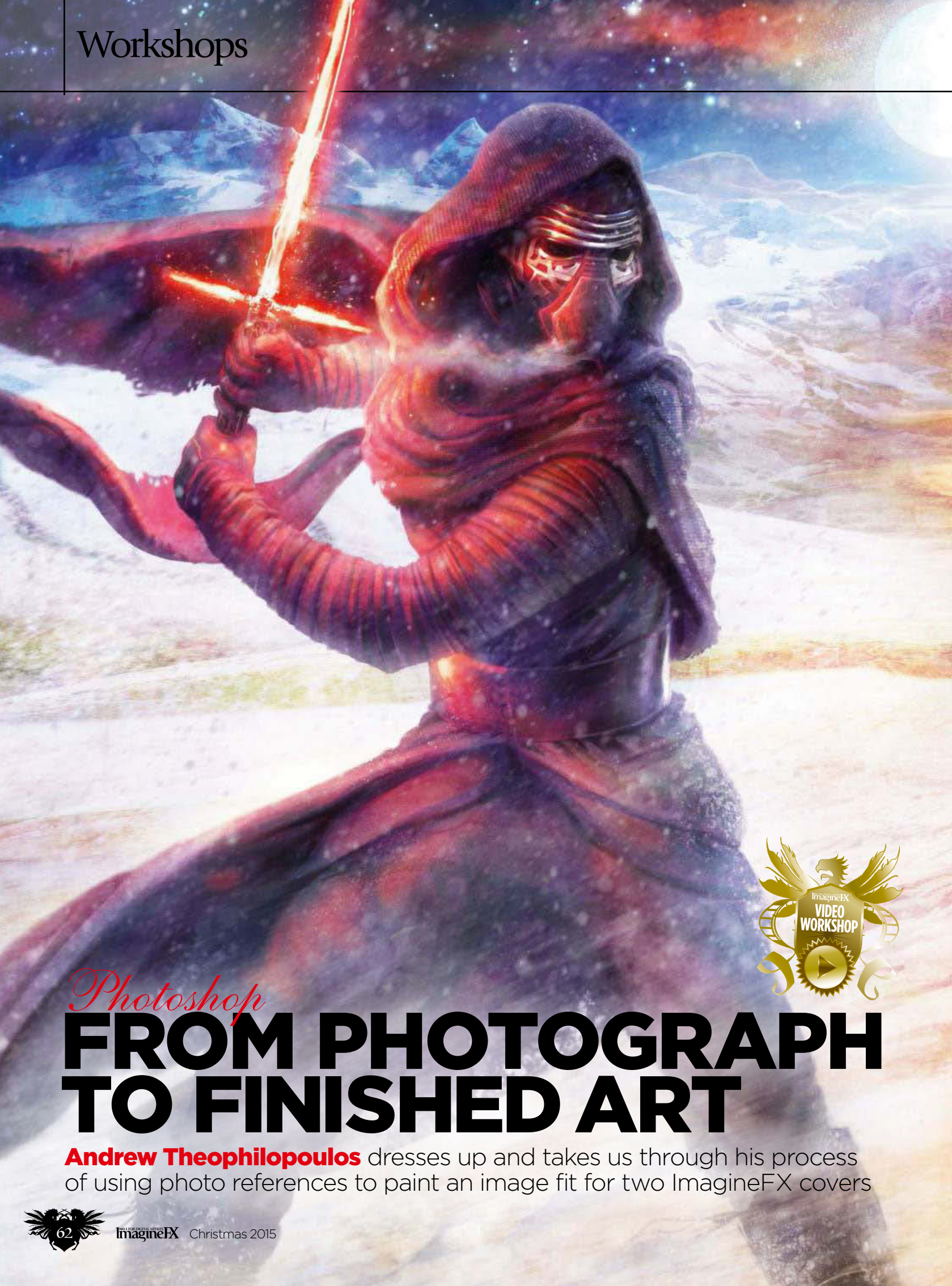


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Photoshop FROM PHOTOGRAPH TO FINISHED ART

Andrew Theophilopoulos dresses up and takes us through his process of using photo references to paint an image fit for two ImagineFX covers





Artist PROFILE

Andrew Theophilopoulos
COUNTRY: US



Andrew lives and works from his lighthouse in Florida's

Sarasota Bay area, freelancing in film, games and television, as well as publishing.
www.andrewtheo.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

The Force is like your artistic talent: it needs to be trained and challenged, and without enough practise you might lose it. One of the best ways to train is to set yourself up for failure, bite off more than you can chew, give yourself a tough lesson to learn from.

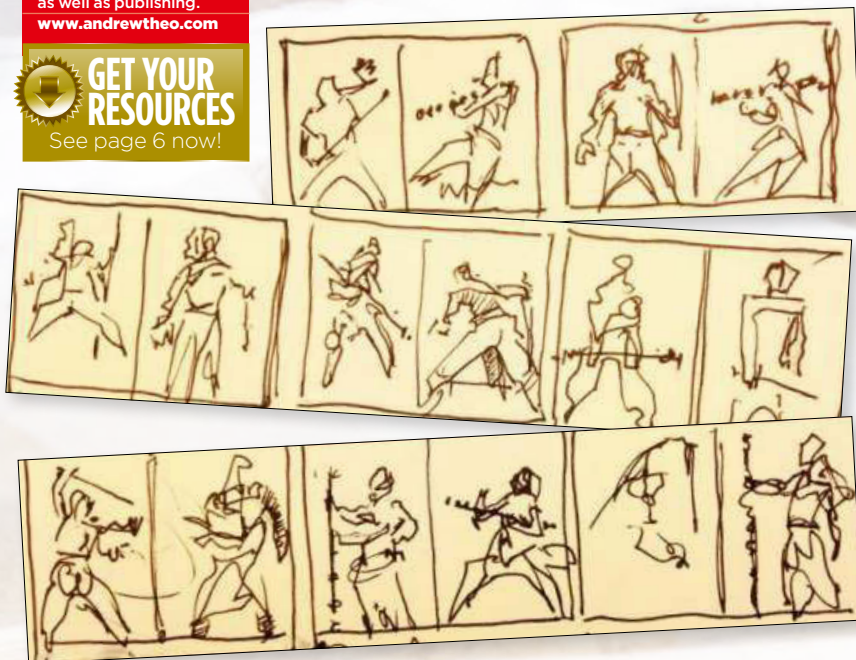
When asked to make not one but *two* cover illustrations for an unreleased film, I found the idea of digging through the

minuscule amount of official The Force Awakens imagery troubling. Even more so when the female character of my commission is a relatively unknown actress with little to offer in terms of portrait photography.

What about painting the portrait of a stealthy Sith, who only appears in the dark in the trailers? How on Earth – or in the galaxy for that matter – does one create a picture resembling two future

icons? What I wouldn't give to be on the level of Drew Struzan, the illustrator of the Star Wars poster art, who's had the tremendous opportunity to meet the cast and have them pose for some of the most iconic film posters out there.

For this workshop, I've spent \$20 on thrift shop supplies to dress as Kylo Ren, and my partner as Rey. My photo shoot will be the starting point of a lengthy push and pull of pixels. Let's get started!



1 Sketching thumbnails

Before jumping into Photoshop, I put my imagination to the test with pencil and paper. I like to doodle my ideas at a micro scale. Typically less than an inch tall, I create a few dozen thumbnails to push through pose, composition and the graphic flow of my image. This portion of the process is for speed: the smaller the thumbnail, the quicker my unique ideas will flow. These micro doodles are for my eyes only and are likely unidentifiable to most. Once I've worked out an appealing composition I scan it into the digital realm for detailing.

2 Presentation to client

Presenting cleaned-up thumbnails to a client can be daunting, and in this case the editor has a different vision for how the illustration should look. Regardless of the amount of effort put into your sketch, it's important to listen to the team. After discussing our thoughts and concerns I had enough input to start the photo shoot. Off to the thrift store...



Shortcuts
Brush size/
hardness
Alt+right-click (PC)
Ctrl+Opt (Mac)
Click and drag to change
size or hardness.

3 Photography for reference

Using a tripod, I shoot with a zoom lens on my D-SLR placed 20-30 feet from my subjects. Standing way back captures the figure in a flat yet 3D illusion without distortion – perfect for illustration. An action pose looks best and I have my model swaying back and forth with force, changing poses every 30 seconds. I now have a few hundred shots to choose from.



4 Tracing photography

After spending several hours and hard cash preparing these shots, this photography is my artwork – just one of the many tools in our modern artistic arsenal. And I use it by tracing it. I never let a photo dictate the decisions that lead to a final illustration, but good reference translates into educated decisions based on reality. So here I loosely trace Rey.



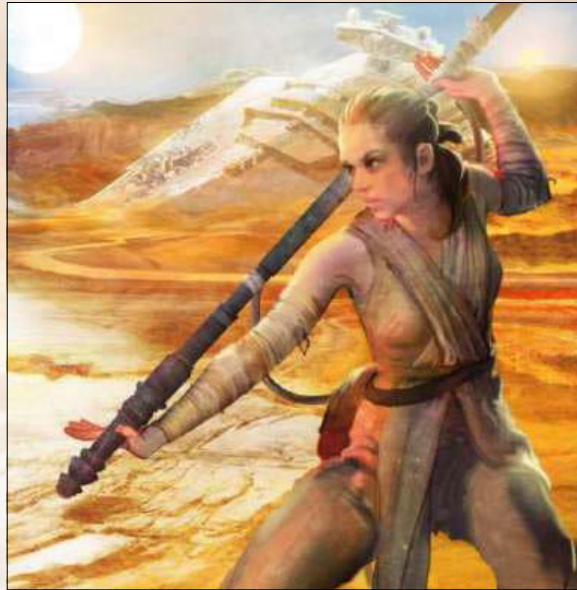
5 Photo bash and photo texture

Top artists are master painters, but they also use high-end tricks to collage, imprint, texture and manipulate designs using photography and 3D. This painting's background comprises 30 or more photo layers, utilising Layer Modes like Multiply, Soft Light or Screen to collage a big environment. Once a realistic landscape evolves from the photo bash, I hand paint the details.



6 Draw, paint, erase

Using colour, value, edge and texture, I bring my sketch to life. It's about pushing and pulling shapes to make the composition readable from a distance. The editor and I move away from a space-themed background – Kylo Ren's costume was virtually invisible. Now, the lightsaber doesn't read with a snowy background, so I surround the red saber with a black cape.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

STANDARD BRUSH: ROUND BRUSH

I've been using the Round brush since eighth grade. It's the DNA of all brushes – with high-end pressure sensitivity you can create anything! Looking for a challenge? Create a custom brush by painting a rock or a tree from scratch using the Round brush... Then you'll see how powerful this basic brush is. I use the pre-installed hard Round brush with the Shape Dynamics set to Size Jitter and Transfer set to Opacity Jitter, using Pen Pressure, to control the flow.



7 Luxury in every square inch

It's exhausting creating the perfect stroke. Ctrl-Z is my best friend, allowing for several attempts at the important stage of polishing. John Singer Sargent was notorious for scraping paint strokes that weren't spot on. Like him, a stroke may take a dozen attempts before I can move on, standing back or zooming out to ensure the latest swipe doesn't stick out like a sore thumb. ●



Daz 3D, Photoshop & ArtRage **DEVELOP EXCITING BOOK COVER ART**

Bruno Wagner reveals how a simple 3D model provides the basis for his female character, taken from the pages of a book

Artist PROFILE

Bruno Wagner
COUNTRY: France



Bruno was born in Strasbourg in 1979 and he graduated in applied arts. Now he's the art director in his own agency and an illustrator for the entertainment industry.
www.yayashin.com

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
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RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
NATURAL AND FAUX
FINISH BRUSHES



Used with the Smudge tool, these brushes are ideal for the paintover stage, helping to create a painterly finish.

This illustration was commissioned for a book cover. The brief was specific, and went into a lot of detail about the character of the girl. To create it, I worked directly with the author of the book, and it was interesting to compare our thoughts on what we imagined the character would look like.

The girl is a rebel and heroic princess escaping on a powerful and muscular horse. The author was keen for the reader

to feel the strength of character and freedom of the heroine, as well as the impressive and somewhat frightening-looking mount.

I found that the difficulty with this commission was achieving the right visual tone. Because the book's readership is a young, female audience, the author wanted the cover to be engaging for that age group without it becoming too kitsch and a caricature of the heroine. She was also keen to avoid an overly masculine

illustration, one that's often seen in the Fantasy genre with the likes of Conan the Barbarian, for example.

So I had to find the right atmosphere and combine soft and feminine tones with a dynamic, elegant composition, while keeping some of my personal darker style, because the author also loved that. Thankfully, everything came together in the end and the author let me know she was very happy with the artwork. Job done! ●

How I create...

A QUICK, CLEAN PAINTOVER



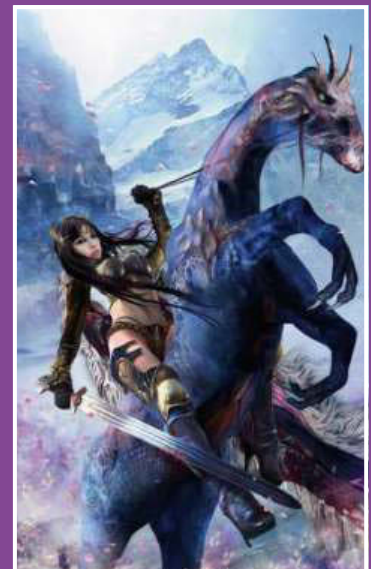
1 Develop the basic composition

I use a simple 3D render for the basis of this illustration, created in Daz 3D. But it could very well be a photograph that inspires you or a quick sketch. The key here is to find the starting composition to serve as a foundation. The image quality of the reference doesn't matter, because I'll be working on top of it.



2 Building up the character

I change the face of the character, add clothing, hair, more realistic textures and particle effects to the scene. I also introduce smoke and fog in front of and behind my character, to increase depth. While working on multiple layers, I gradually increase my colour range from pink to blue.



3 Cleaning up and paintover

I take the time to sort and then flatten my layers. Then I use my brushes with the Smudge tool. I choose an appropriate Opacity and Hardness, and for the hair I use a brush with a strong and fine point. To smoothen the horse's body I use a brush with a larger tip on a low Opacity.

Background paintover with the Smudge tool

When it comes to painting the background I use the Smudge tool with my custom Faux Finish brush. I lay down some large, random brushstrokes that result in movement and texture, like a traditional painting. It also contrasts well with the more accurate portrayal of the character and horse.

Final colour correction

Once my image is finished, I create two versions: one that strengthens the reds, another that emphasises the blues and greens. Then I combine them. The bottom half features tones of reds and gold, while the top becomes colder with blue-green tones. This helps to reinforce the depth of field and enriches my chromatic scale.

Apply snake and reptile textures

I use several real-life textures from various reptiles and snakes for the horse's body. The Transform tool enables me to follow the curves of the horse's muscles and body volume. I use the textures with different Overlay mode layers to retain lights and shadows. This means I'm able to quickly add realism and fine details.

Paintover effect with ArtRage

As a last step I open my image in software known for its traditional paint engine, such as ArtRage or Painter, and lay down large brushstrokes that are thick and dense. Then I put this above over my old image at 30-40 per cent Opacity, which gives a slight patina effect as well as a warm traditional painting style.



Modo & Photoshop **EASY 3D STEPS FOR CINEMATIC IMPACT**

Artist PROFILE
Josh Viers
LOCATION: US

Josh has over 15 years' experience in film, games and TV. He's worked for Warner Bros, ILM and Microsoft.
www.conceptbyjosh.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Josh Viers clearly conveys a moody Star Wars cinematic moment, achieved in part by painting over 3D models

For this workshop I'm going to give you a little insight into how I create some of my Star Wars art. I've only just recently started using 3D in my process, and I've found it's invaluable in composing a scene. With even the simplest 3D elements I'm able to define and compose my space in a way that makes it tangible.

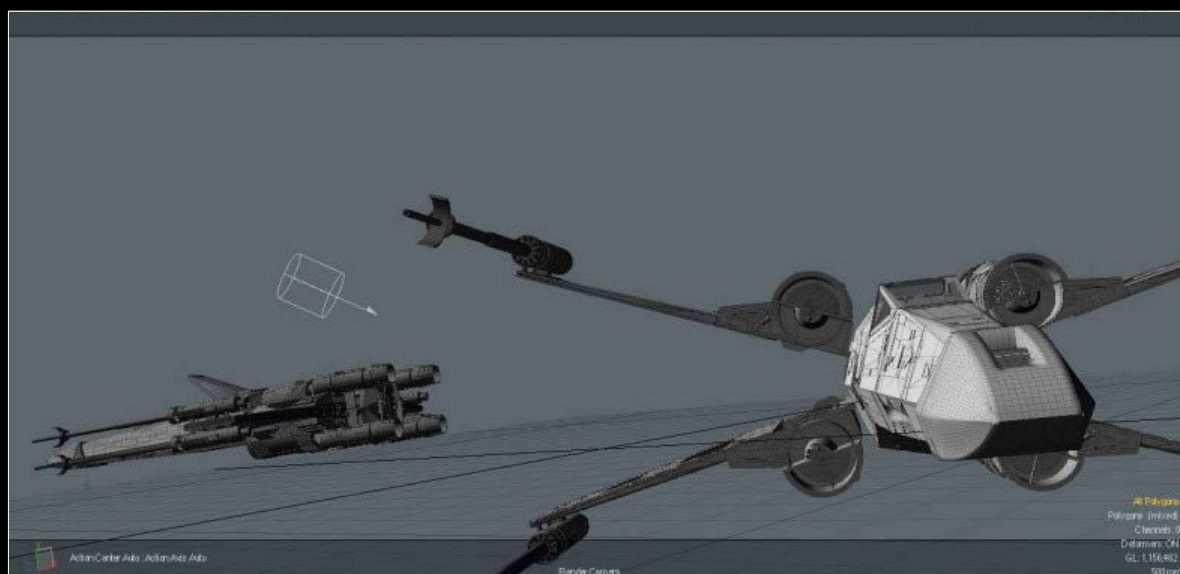
Since I love film it also makes sense to start with that as my inspiration. I'll

often take a scene from one of my favourite films and use it as a starting point. You'll be building your art on the selected scene, so choose wisely! Remember, just because you love *Clueless* doesn't mean it'll be a good starting point for your art. Pick a movie that was lauded by critics for its look – a film with great cinematography.

For example, I know that using a Coen Brothers film as the launch point is a safe bet because Roger Deakins acts as director

of photography for most of their films. If I can emulate Roger's work then I'm heading in the right direction.

My end result will often be very different from what I started with, but with a solid foundation and good inspiration it's hard to go wrong. If you're not sure where to begin, Evan Richards' blog (www.evanrichards.com) is an amazing resource for great cinematography. Okay, it's time to put my advice into practice!



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
FLAT BRUSH

This is a great brush for carving hard, decisive shapes within a scene.

SOFT BRUSH

I use this at the end of the painting process.

TEXTURED BRUSH

A brush from Sergey Kolesov's collection (<http://ifxm.ag/s-kolesov>) and my favourite!

1 Visualise the basic shot using Modo

I select a still from No Country for Old Men, featuring a figure standing between two 4x4s. Then I fire up Modo and drop a couple of X-Wing models (purchased from www.turbosquid.com/Search/Artists/rynanalan) into a scene. I keep my No Country still side by side with the Modo window so I can compare my framing. The program's great for helping me visualise my shots. ➔



2 Create a simple render with a basic environment

As soon as I have my basic shot all set up I kick out a very simple render. I've found over time that simply using Modo's basic environments for global illumination gives me enough to start painting. I often don't even need any lights!

Shortcuts
Mass copy and paste
Shift+Cmd+C or V (Mac)
Shift+Ctrl+C or V (PC)
Copies everything that's visible and pastes it on a new layer.



3 Bring in a moodier sky

I cut out my mountains and drop an overcast sky behind them. I'm careful to darken the values of the hills, so they don't stand out as too bright against the dark sky. I mask out parts of my X-wings so they look like they're sitting on the ground.



PRO SECRETS

Colour wash

Sample a colour from your image, create a new layer above the others and then fill that layer with the sampled colour. Drop that layer to 50 per cent Opacity and cycle through the available layer styles. Overlay works well for me.



4 Moving things around to suit the scene

I decide to move my X-wings around after dropping in some of the original elements from No Country. While it's important to start with great inspiration, don't be afraid to mix things up and resize them constantly. Your composition will evolve during the painting process, so don't get married to anything early on!



PRO SECRETS

Sharpen up your act

As a very last step I often copy everything that's visible onto a new layer at the very top of my document, and then sharpen that layer. This is a great way to add just a little bit of snap to your image. But be careful! It can cause your image to sizzle if you overdo it.

5 More drama, with the help of some Force levitation!

After I replace the actor from Old Country with a Darth Vader toy, I realise that my scene will be much more dramatic if I levitate my foreground X-wing off the ground. This is easy to visualise once I place a soft shadow under the ship.



6 Strengthening the mood

I select colours from my mountains and ground, and use the Gradient tool to create bands of medium values. This is a great way to imbue a scene with mood while removing areas that might otherwise need a lot of detail work. Also, I start sketching on that Darth toy to get started on my own Sith Lord.



7 Hint at some gusts of wind

Wind is great for drama and I can use it to lose some of the hard edges on my foreground X-wing. This is extremely helpful for getting the stink off of my simple Modo render. I also continue to refine my character. I find an image of an old World War II gas mask and plop it down as my face.



8 Making the wind work in the scene

I need to be more specific with the wind, so I start adding blowing debris. I find a good selection of images online that have dirt, dust and garbage blowing around. The photo I'm using features dark debris in front of a light-coloured storm so I use it on a Multiply layer. I often have to push the levels pretty far to get rid of unwanted elements. ➡➡



9 Introduce foreground detail

Now I finally begin to add detail to my foreground X-wing. For this I use a photo of scratched-up metal on an Overlay layer. I make sure to desaturate the metal texture as well as tweaking its levels until I have the desired amount of detail.



10 Depicting car crash art

This X-wing was on the losing end of a dogfight and it needs to look like it. When I find a photo of an abandoned car with what feels like the right kind of damage, I cut out the bit I want, drop it onto my X-wing and cycle through my layer styles until I find one that works well enough to paint over.



11 Time to brighten the scene

This piece is coming along nicely enough, but it just doesn't feel dark enough at the moment. This is where I break out my trusty Gradient tool again and drop in a medium-dark gradient behind the X-wing at the back. There, that feels better, doesn't it?



12 Lens flare on the lightsaber

I want lens flare coming off the lightsaber. I create a Lighten layer, pick a saturated, medium-value red and use the Gradient tool to create an even band of red at the level of the lightsaber. Then I create a Layer Mask, fill it with black and use a Radial Gradient in the Layer Mask to paint the red band back in.



13 Pushing the composition's colours and values

I use colour washes and levels adjustment layers to push the colours and values. I paste my entire image onto one layer, set it to Lighten, and paint directly on that layer with a large, soft brush set to Color Dodge. I pick warm and cool colours from my image and lightly dodge the layer to brighten the nose of my X-wing and highlight my Sith Lord. Ta da! ●



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Artist insight **CREATE INNOVATIVE MECH DESIGNS**

Concept artist **Brian Sum** shares how he creates futuristic mech designs through a series of design principles, and Photoshop tips and techniques

Artist **PROFILE**

Brian Sum

LOCATION: Canada



Brian is a senior concept artist at Bioware Montreal. He's

worked on Mass Effect 2 and 3, and Dragon Age: Origins, and is now busy creating art for Mass Effect Andromeda.
www.briansum.com



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

As soon as I was introduced to transforming robots and sci-fi vehicles through Saturday morning cartoons as a kid, I was instantly hooked on the genre. With pencil in hand, I loved the freedom I had to imagine and invent something that didn't exist.

It's still a very liberating passion for me today. Although a lot of the mechs that

I design today have evolved from an appreciation for industrial design and have more functional considerations, the inner-child still loves to push for wilder ideas. Fortunately, this bodes well for a career in film and video games.

The following are a few tips and tricks I've picked up over the years for designing sci-fi mechs. They range from general design principles that are good to keep in

mind, to Photoshop tools that every artist should use. Some of the pieces of work that will be shown may either be intended to feel photorealistic, while others are more graphic in nature. But some key principles always remain consistent. A unique silhouette, an interesting hook and a contrast between highly detailed areas and negative space are just some of the principles that I focus on.



USE REFERENCE FOR INSPIRATION

I always start by gathering as much reference as possible. It's important to note that inspiration doesn't necessarily have to come from the same subject

matter. Sometimes an image's shape, colour or texture may be a good source of reference. Your reference material is essentially attempting to focus your thoughts and ideas. This can help to start

shape your idea. In this piece I was inspired by the AT-AT walkers from Star Wars as well as the ship from Prometheus. I really loved the heavy machinery idea and wanted to convey that sense with this piece.

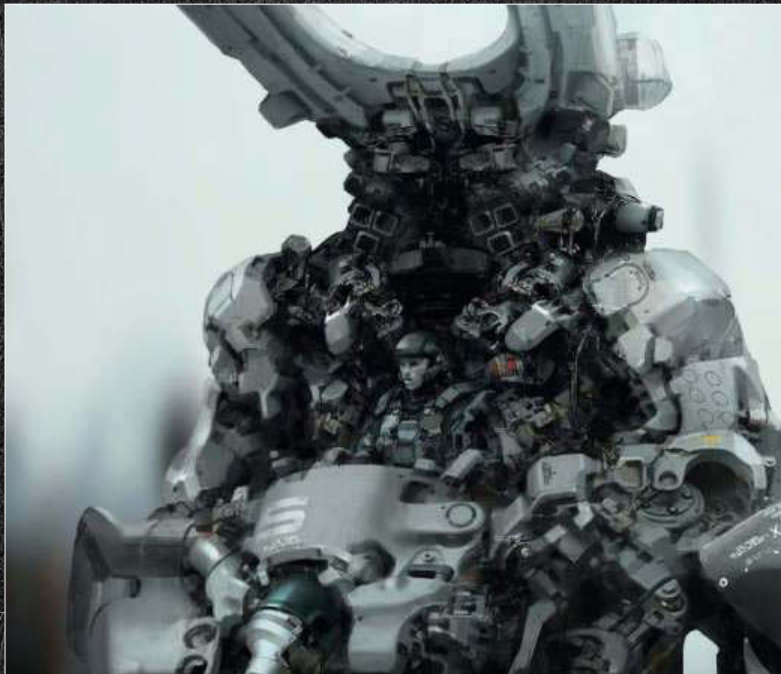
2 MAKE THE EFFORT TO FIND THE HOOK

When striving to create something original it's important to think about what makes your design truly unique. In the age of Facebook, Tumblr and Pinterest, art and inspiration is easily available online and as a result easily imitated. This makes striving for something that's never been seen before that much more important – and difficult.

In this piece, Fire Fighter 2025, I was going for a sleek sci-fi mech that's able to carry enough fire extinguishing materials for the largest of fires, but also be manoeuvrable enough to get into hard-to-reach areas. I wanted the firefighting theme to be instantly recognisable so I kept the fire truck red a dominant colour to help convey that idea across. Whether it's the idea, the shape or just the colour, it's important to think about what your hook is.

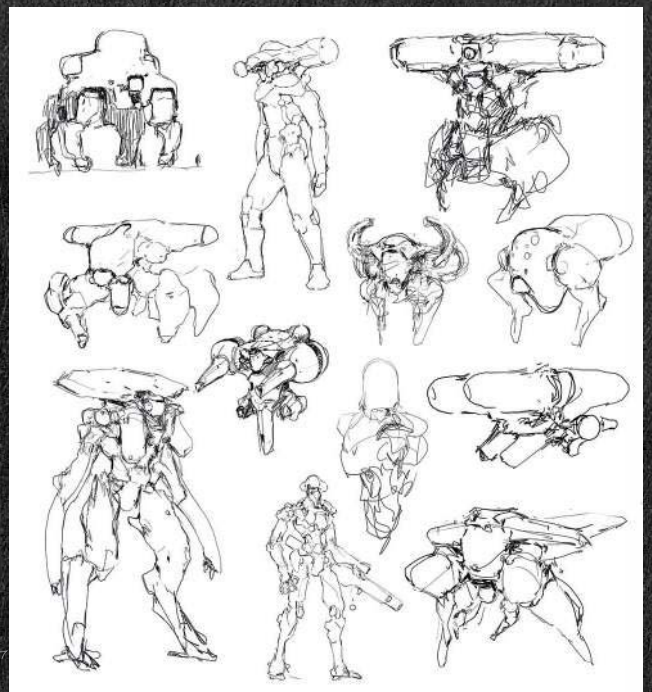


“You might find that using photos in the thumbnail phase helps you to find interesting silhouettes”



3 PHOTOBASH FOR HAPPY ACCIDENTS

There's no right or wrong time to start using photographs in the process. You might find that using photos in the thumbnail phase helps you to find interesting silhouettes, much like seeing shapes in the clouds. By moving and combining photos together, I tend to generate a lot of interesting shapes and ideas that I wouldn't have if I were to paint using traditional methods. This method helps to give me some rough shapes, but there's plenty of clean-up work that follows.



4 FOCUS ON THUMBNAILS FIRST

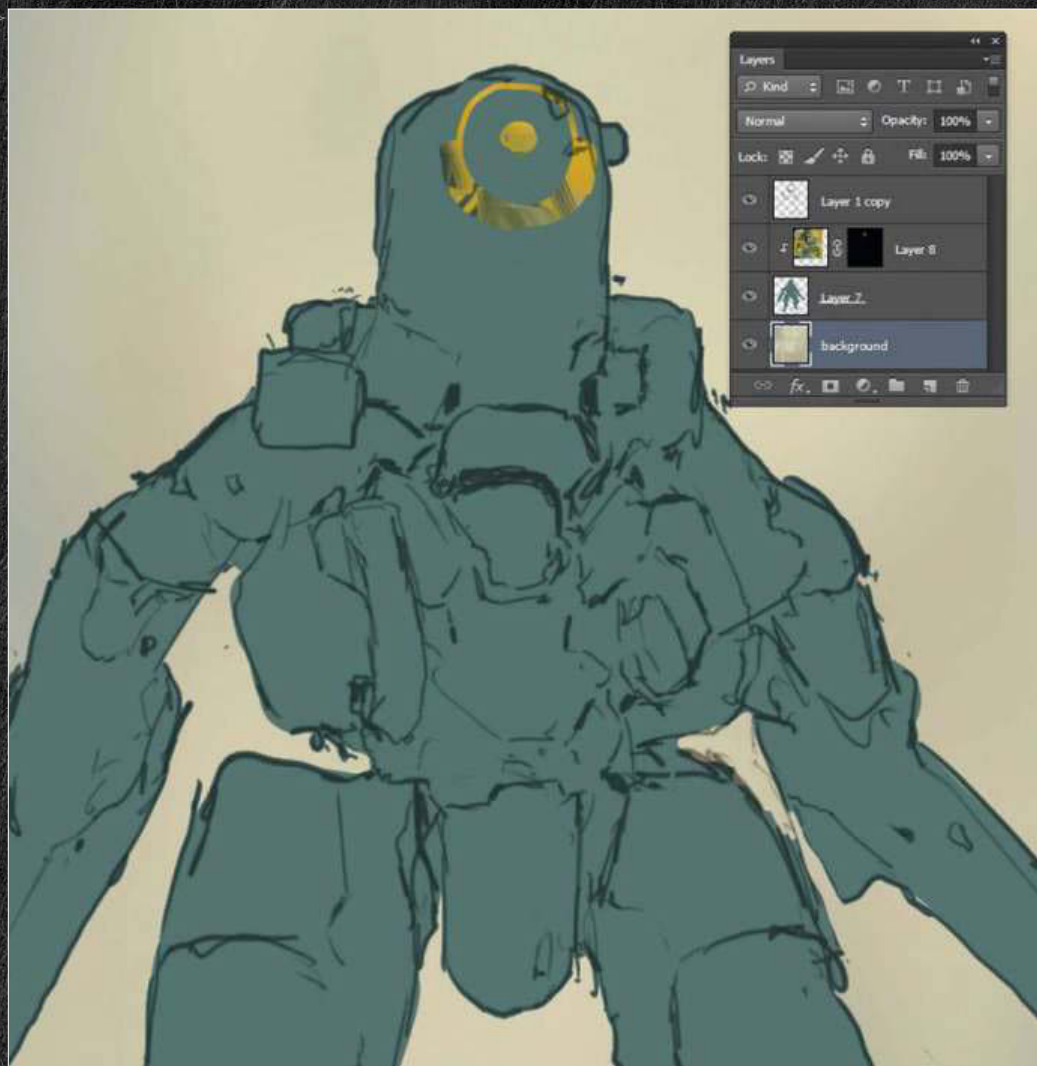
A good way to get ideas out quickly is to start with a series of thumbnails. This helps to focus the attention on major shapes and less about minor details at this point. A design almost always suffers when the major shapes aren't established first. Focus on an interesting silhouette. A successful design will always have a silhouette that reads well. Usually, this means that there's a certain flow to the design and it doesn't feel too rigid. The shapes and the relationship between the shapes will determine whether the design works or not. ➤

5 CLIPPING AND LAYER MASKS

Ever since Photoshop introduced Clipping masks and Layer masks to its armoury, non-destructive painting gave every artist the ability – and confidence – to paint worry-free. The Clipping mask enables me to paint over my shape using however many clipping masks as I want without having to worry about going over the main layer's silhouette.

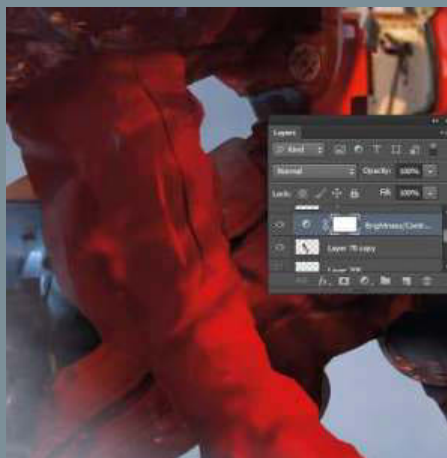
Painting with layer masks also means I'm able to paint with textures rather than the traditional method of painting with one colour. This creates more colour variety and results in more happy accidents.

“Painting with layer masks means that I'm able to paint with textures rather than with just one colour”



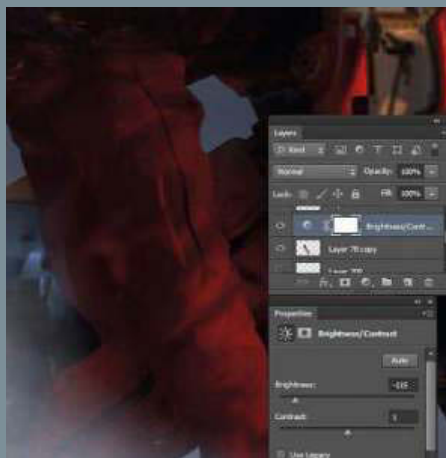
SHADING WITH BRIGHTNESS/CONTRAST TOOL

Follow these tips to quickly give your mech art a greater sense of volume and realism



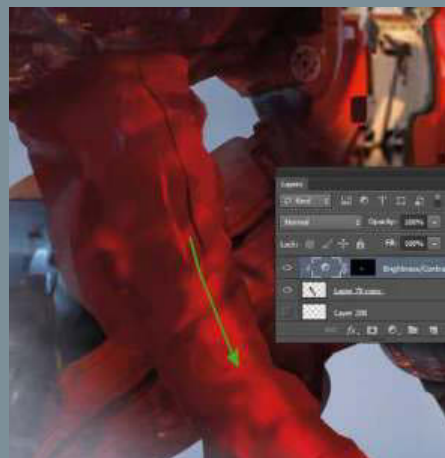
1 Introduce volume

You can quickly create volume by shading your shapes with a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer. Place the adjustment layer above the layer you want to shade. In this example I'm shading the legs of this mech.



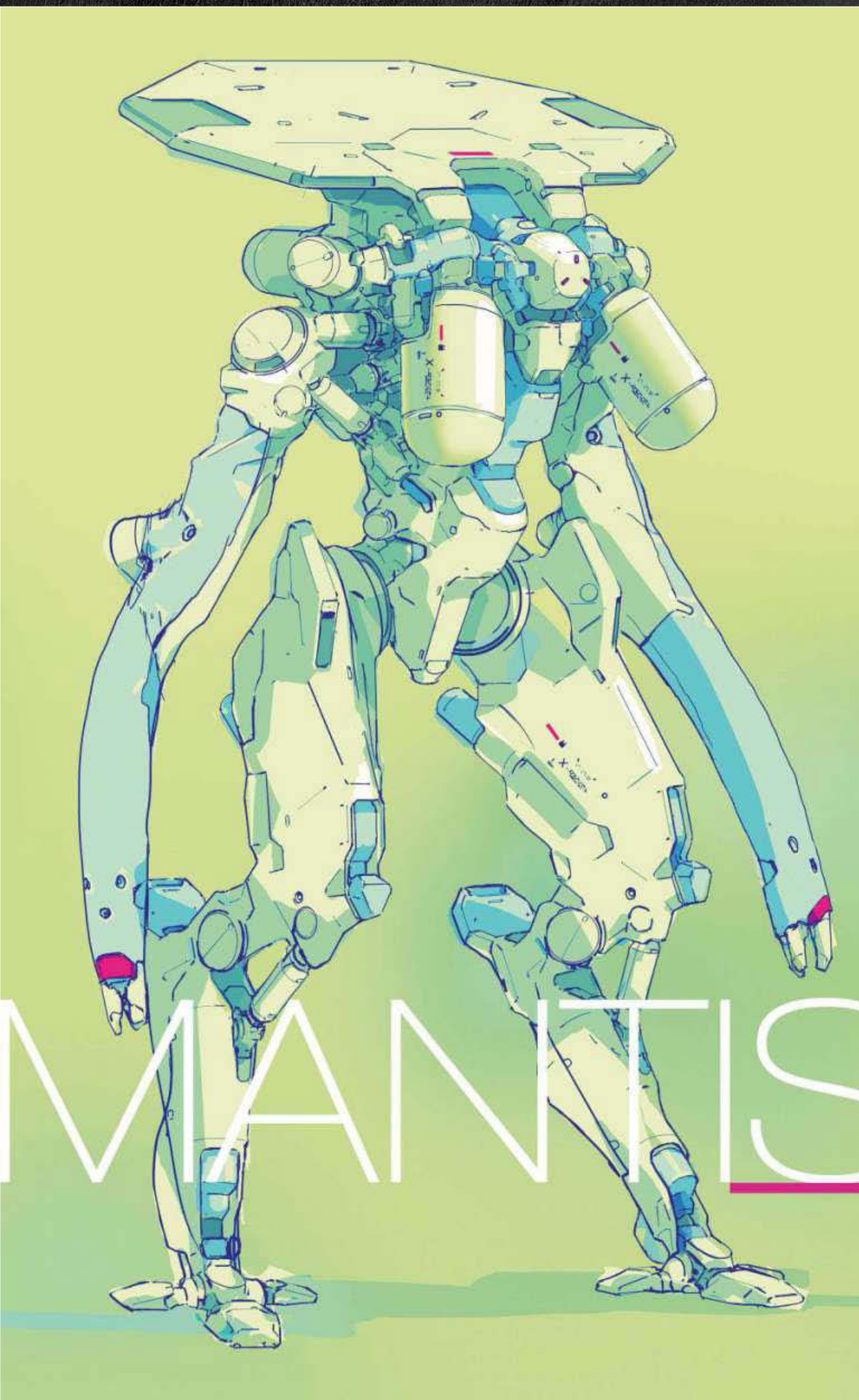
2 Paint in the shadows

I adjust the brightness down on the slider. By default the mask is white, which means that the adjustment will affect every area where there's white. With the mask selected, I hit Ctrl+I to inverse the mask (now all black) so that I can paint in the shading instead of the other way around.



3 Precise adjustments

With the adjustment layer selected, I press Ctrl+G to make the layer a clipping mask over my main layer with the leg. This enables me to paint on the mask without going over the edge of the leg. Because this effect is applied through a mask, you have all the flexibility to paint the shading where you see fit.



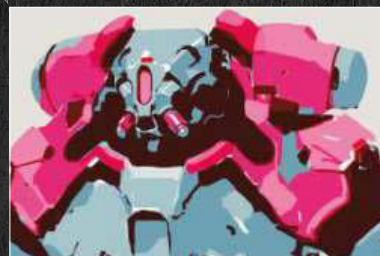
6 LIMIT YOUR COLOUR PALETTE

I find that a design always suffers when there are too many colours used. Sometimes it may be that the colours have the same amount of saturation or intensity. They tend to compete for attention and make the design look too noisy. I usually stick with a maximum of two main colours (one of them being a more neutral colour), with smaller, secondary accent colours. Remember, less is more. For more colour ideas, I like to go to <https://color.adobe.com>.



7 THINK ABOUT NEGATIVE SPACE

Balance out areas of detail with empty space. I love adding the micro details to a piece; they make the design pop! But often a design with too many details on show makes it feel too noisy for my taste. I like to balance out a design with areas of less detail. The eye needs a place to rest. This could be a smooth panel surface or a clean, overlapping fabric. Sci-fi designs tend to have smooth and clean shapes anyway, so there are plenty of opportunities to incorporate those emptier areas. ➤➤



FR2 MRU FR2 MRU FR2 MRU FR2 MRU

8 ADD DECALS AND TEXT TO YOUR MACHINERY

Where appropriate, I like to apply logo decals and text on the surface of the mech design. I studied graphic design in school, and I've always enjoyed logo design and branding. By placing text and logos strategically in specific areas, I find it helps to complement the overall design. I don't like to clutter the design with decals since it's only meant as an accent and not be the main focus. Along with adding a bit of graphic flare to the design I think decals can also give a bit of backstory to the mech. Maybe it's the logo of an intelligence agency for a secret project, who knows? Just have fun with it!



9 INTRODUCE REFLECTIVE SURFACES

Sci-fi design and hard surface design usually go hand in hand. Adding reflectivity to those hard surfaces helps to convey a sense of realism. Think of its surroundings and show hints of that on the surfaces. The amount will depend on how reflective the surface is. Chrome, like a mirror, has highly reflective properties while brushed metal will have less reflectivity. It's important to note that by adding the colours and tones of the environment on the mech, it helps to gel the overall piece together.

“Blurring the background helps to convey a sense of depth to the scene”

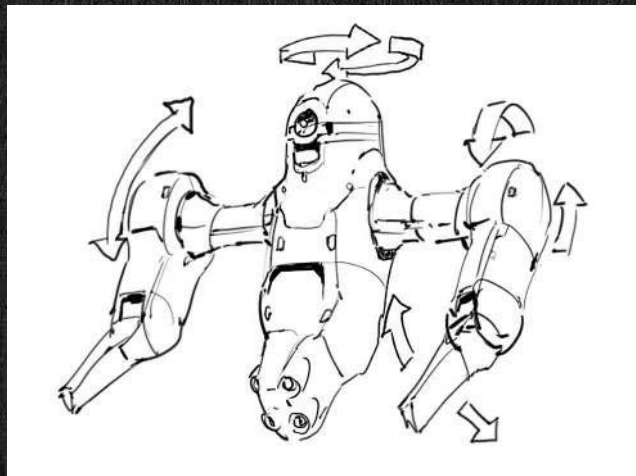


10 MAKE IT FUNCTIONAL

It's always good to think of how the mech is going to move, fly, shoot or whatever. Although it's important to create a strong silhouette, having a design that functions in a logical way will add believability. Add hydraulics, cables, nuts and bolts. Incorporating those details will sell the functionality of the mech to the viewer. This also helps add that extra level of detail and realism to the design. And of course, it's always fun to come up with explanations for why you decided to give that giant four-legged walker a giant drilling mechanism!

11 BLUR THE BACKGROUND

Blurring the background helps to convey a sense of depth to the scene. Quite often I'll take an existing background photo and apply a Gaussian Blur filter to it. This focuses the viewer's attention on the mech itself – because there's nothing in the background to catch their eye. To lead the viewer even more, trying adding a foreground element and blurring that as well.





12 SHOW MATERIAL VARIETY

Consider contrasting materials such as fabric with hard surfaces. Use photos to easily sell the illusion of different materials. This adds variety and believability to the piece. Think about shiny and matte surfaces. What kind of pattern does the fabric have? Is the fabric stretchy or is it a hard, rigid material? Thinking about the mech's purpose can help determine what type of materials should be used. A military mech may need a more armoured surface to protect itself, while a mech that's required to be more agile may need flexible fabrics for easier manoeuvrability.

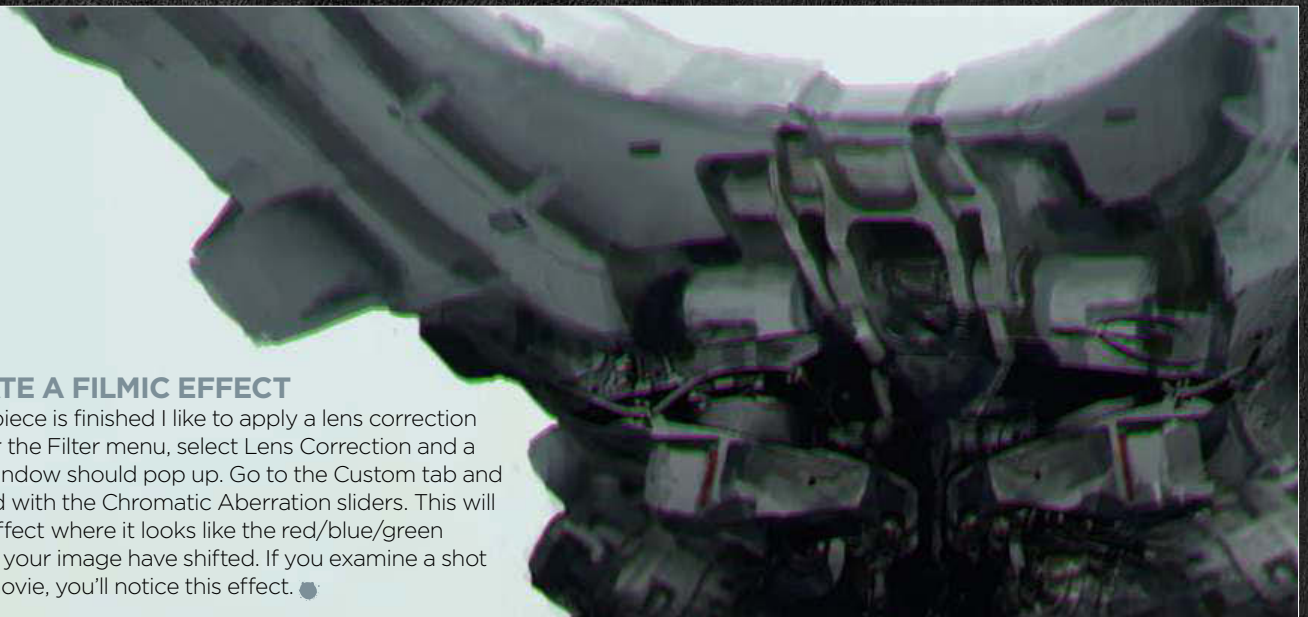


13 PAINT EMISSIVE LIGHTS AND LENS FLARES

These eye-catching light sources help to enhance that sci-fi feeling. When working on concepts in the Mass Effect universe, I find that any concept I'm working on instantly jumps into the future as soon as I throw in an emissive light. It's a good way to lead the viewer as well, since the eye will naturally look at the areas with light. But unlike a JJ Abrams film, apply the lens flare sparingly. It can result in overkill when used too much.

14 CREATE A FILMIC EFFECT

When the piece is finished I like to apply a lens correction filter. Under the Filter menu, select Lens Correction and a separate window should pop up. Go to the Custom tab and play around with the Chromatic Aberration sliders. This will create an effect where it looks like the red/blue/green channels in your image have shifted. If you examine a shot from any movie, you'll notice this effect. ●



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ImagineFX Christmas 2015

Krita Desktop **GO BEYOND THE LAYER BASICS**



Learn about more advanced layer features and find out how to use them. **Katarzyna Oleska** lays out the available options

Apart from the basic actions you can perform on layers, you can also control them in a couple of more advanced ways, which can speed up your painting process. Each layer can be adjusted by using filters, and choosing one of these options will affect the layer permanently.

You can also use masks and special layers (accessible via the Layers Docker) that will only temporarily affect the painting, because they can be switched off and on. It may increase the size of the file (for formats that support layers), but these special layers ensures the user has greater control over their painting process.

Artist **PROFILE**

Katarzyna Oleska
COUNTRY: England



Katarzyna is an illustrator who works for publishers and private clients, specializing in fantasy and sci-fi illustrations as well as portraits and caricatures. She is known as an illustrator of some major book titles including Terry Pratchett Discworld series.
<http://ifxm.ag/kataro>

MAKE USE OF YOUR LAYER OPTIONS



A. Paint Layer

This layer is used specifically for painting with brushes and for rasterised patterns.

B. Group Layer

Group Layer works like a folder containing many layers within it. It helps organise the file and you can switch a group (and the layers it contains) with one click.

C. Clone Layer

You can clone any of the existing layers. All the changes you make to the original layer will also appear on the Clone Layer.

D. Vector Layer

You can use certain tools on a vector layer and observe how differently they behave in comparison to the Paint Layer. Creating shapes (rectangles, circles and so forth) filled with colours, patterns and gradients will enable you to edit them (colours, patterns, gradients) as you go.

E. Fill Layer

Here you can create layers filled with colour or pattern. However, these layers, unlike vector layers, can't be edited once created.

F. Transform Mask

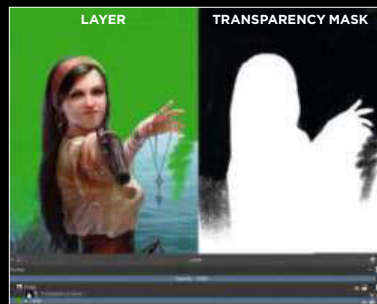
This mask enables you to move, rotate, scale and change the shape of the layer that it's attached to, without changing its original shape. To revert to this original shape simply turn the mask off.

G. Move layer out of or into a group

To make a layer a part of a group you need to position it above that group and click the Move layer into group button. To move it out click Move layer out of group. You can also create sub-groups within groups and move them into and out of groups the same way.

1 Transparency Mask

To create a Transparency Mask click an arrow next to the + icon on the Layers Docker and choose it from the list. Select the Transparency Mask and start painting (Color Selector will change to monochrome). The black painted areas represent 100 per cent transparency and the white areas 0 per cent. Shades of grey in between these two colours represent different values of opacity.



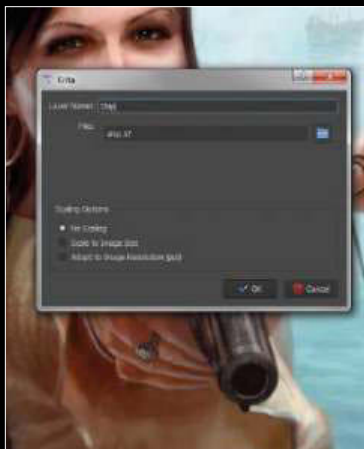
2 Filter Layer vs Filter Mask

Both Filter Layer and Filter Mask enable the user to apply different filters to the image or selected layer without affecting it permanently. Filter Layer works independently and affects everything that's below it. Filter Mask works only with one particular layer and affects only that layer. Here the Filter Mask only affects the pirate and not background



3 Bring in artwork on a File Layer

File Layer makes it possible to import any image file to your painting. Once imported, it acts like a new layer (a multi-layer file will show in a flattened state). The File Layer, however, remains linked to the original file and so any changes made to the original file will also be visible in your painting.





Photoshop

PAINT STAR WARS PRODUCTION ART

Artist PROFILE

Feng Zhu
COUNTRY: US



Feng has been part of many high-profile game and film projects. He founded Feng Zhu Design Inc. and the FZD School of Design, and is also the creator of the popular Design Cinema channel on YouTube. www.fzdschool.com

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Feng Zhu taps into his extensive film pipeline experience and creates a production painting for a Star Wars project

When I was asked by the ImagineFX team to paint a Star Wars-themed scene, I jumped at the chance. The ice planet Hoth has always been one of my favourite planets in the Star Wars universe, and I have fond memories of playing with the Imperial shuttle toy back in the 1980s. Thus, I decided to combine them both into a single themed painting for this workshop.

Production paintings are common in the early stages of film production. They are used in the pre-green light stage to

help visualise films for investments. They also help set the mood, styling and design direction for the project. Directors, actors, production designers, executives and illustrators all use production paintings, to ensure they're all on the same page.

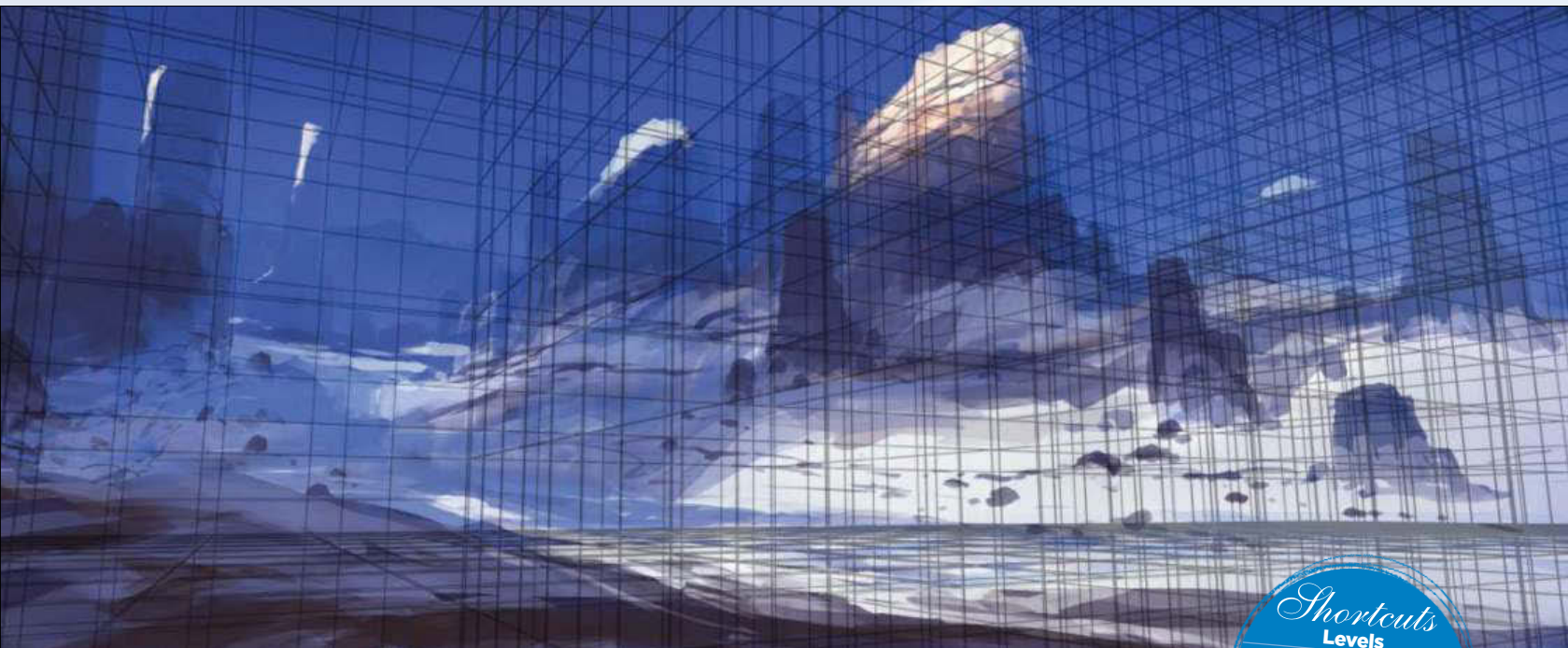
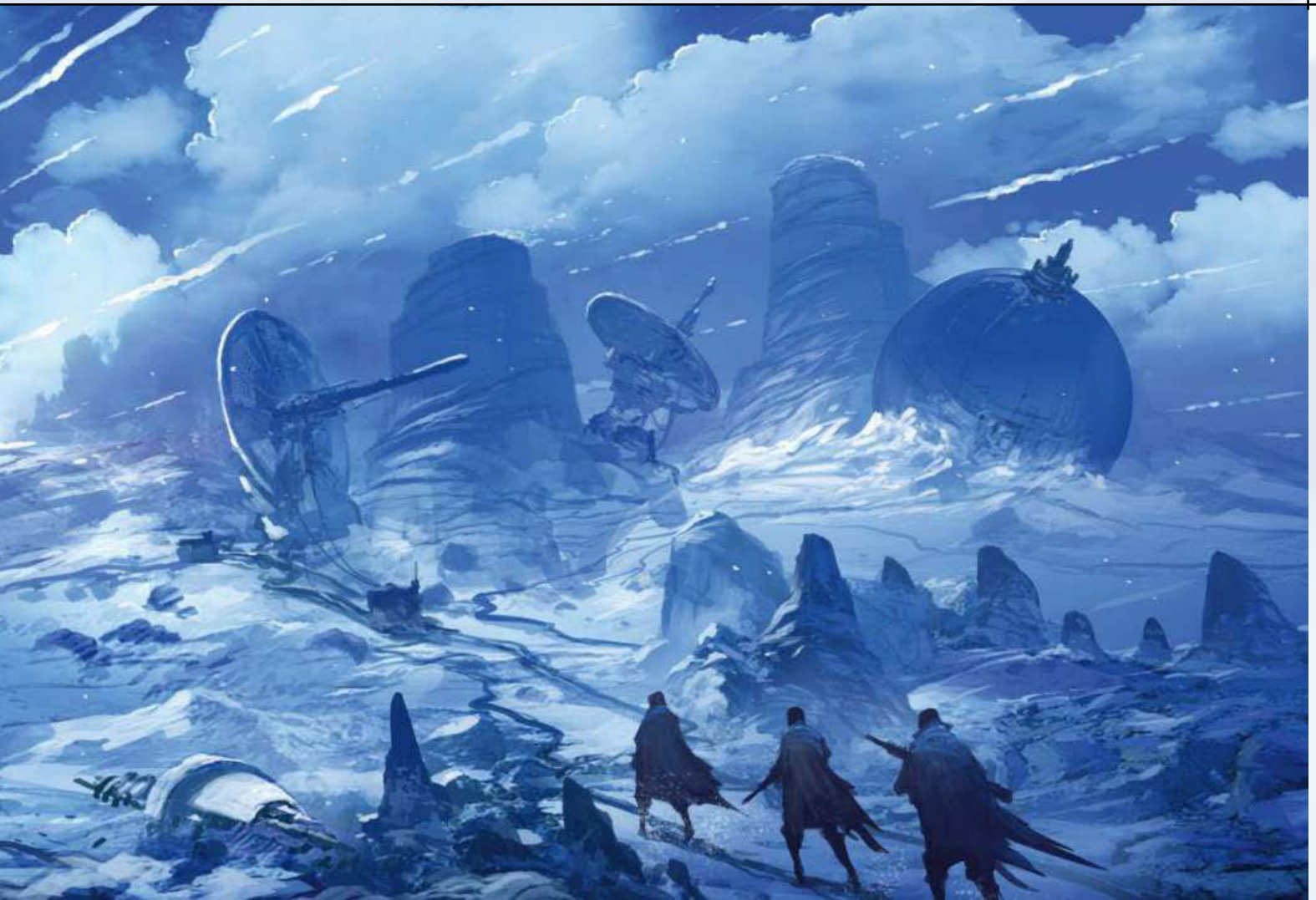
In this workshop I'll take a short description from an imaginary script and visualise the scene. The descriptions reads: "A small group of unidentified individuals discover the remains of a crashed Imperial shuttle on Hoth."

I start production paintings by listing the five "Ws." They are "what, when,

where, who and why?" You don't need to answer all of the "W" questions, but the painting should contain information that enables the viewers to see those elements. For this painting, they are as follows.

What – a crash-landed Imperial Shuttle; when – a few hours before sunset; where – Hoth; who – a small group (their allegiance is unknown); and why – this part is left for the viewer to decide.

Having these topics enable you to start the basic production painting with a goal in mind. This is particularly important when working with tight deadlines.



1 Establish the fundamentals of the composition

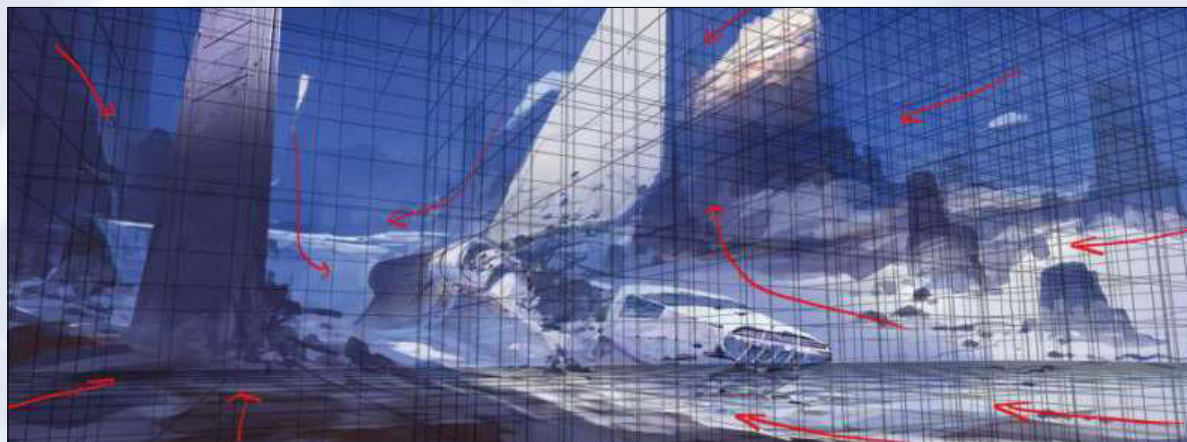
I start most paintings and drawings by establishing an initial horizon line and camera position. Here, I use a pre-built perspective grid that I made almost 10 years ago in 3ds Max. Having this grid saves me about 10 minutes of hand-plotting. Sometimes I start with a rough line sketch or jump directly into a rough painting; as in this case. I don't have a clear rule in terms of which method I prefer to start with. It usually comes down to an almost instinctive feeling before I start the piece. ➡



PRO SECRETS

Put yourself in the picture

Sometimes students would ask me where to add details. I use a very simple solution. Just imagine that you're standing inside the environment. Where would you look? Which area would you find interesting? Identify those areas and add details. We don't tend to place priority on every object in front of us. We focus on importance objects first and "feel" out the rest. In a painting, those are the same areas where details are applied.



2 Develop the flow through the composition

Using the grid, I can quickly add in the Imperial shuttle and start balancing the composition and energy flow (indicated by the red arrows). For this shot, the most important element is the shuttle and how we first see it. Because it's a "discovery" shot, I place the camera mid-distance, as if we're just seeing this shuttle for the first time. I also place the camera low to the ground to simulate human height. A bit of three-point perspective adds to the sense of scale.



3 Finalise the rough composition

The initial rough is complete at this stage. It takes about 35 minutes to reach this step. In a production schedule, many roughs can be completed in a day. I usually like to start five or six roughs on my first day of work. When working in a studio, those six roughs can be reviewed at the end of day by the director or production designer. They are not finished pieces by any means, but good enough for in-house presentations. This can save a lot of time by narrowing down the design by the end of the first day.



4 Responding to feedback and rebalancing the scene

Upon feedback from the ImagineFX team, the shuttle is moved more to the left to allow for a wider shot. This is still the rough stage and so moving elements around is relatively easy. I haven't committed to any details or clean up, so there's no danger of losing previously finished work. I can't stress the importance of working rough. During production, things change all the time. If you commit to details and clean-ups too early, it can bite you in the butt later. Keep things loose, rough, fluid and exploratory in the beginning.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

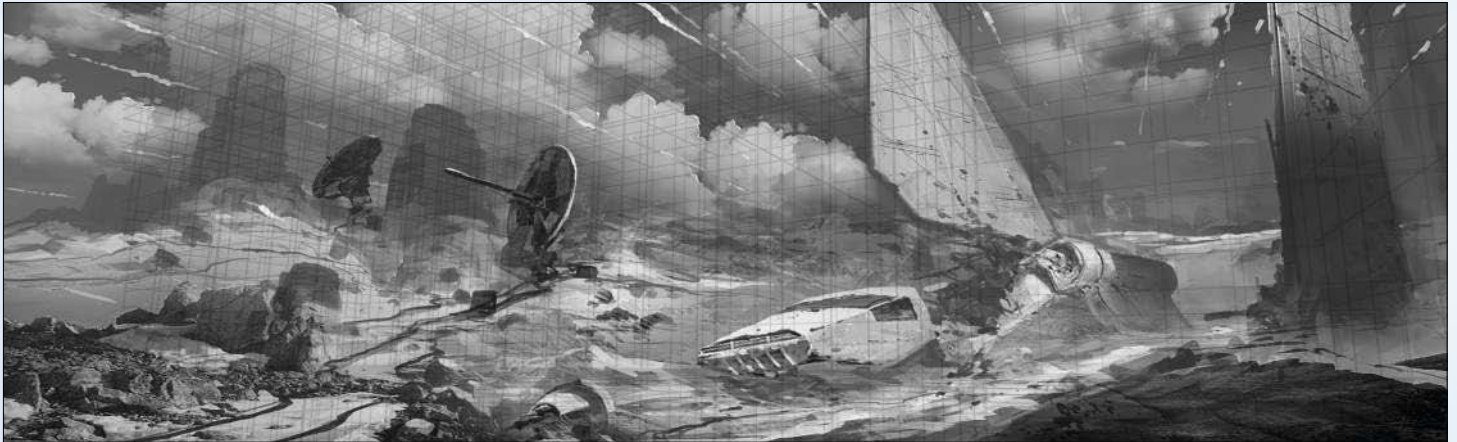
STANDARD BRUSH: CHALK BRUSH

I know CS6 has some amazing brushes that simulate natural media, but I like sticking with just the default Chalk brush. It does a good job of emulating gouache, which is the medium that I used before making the move to digital.



5 Applying visual shortcuts: textures and photos

I lay in a few photo elements to save time, such as rocks, snow and radar dishes. I do this to emphasise the difference between using photo textures and photo-bashing. Both methods are used during production depending on the situation. Photo-bashing works if the entire scene can be easily produced by using photos. In this case, because the main element – the shuttle – isn't real, it's faster to simply paint everything and use photo-textures to add details.



6 Value checking and mirroring

I often flip the canvas to check composition. A good composition should work mirrored (and even upside down). During this stage, I check the black and white values by adding a layer on top of the layer stack and setting its properties to Saturation. Then I fill this layer with solid black. Now I simply turn on/off the layer to check black and white values. The common value balance is darker for foreground, mid for mid-ground and lighter for background (sometimes referred to as atmospheric perspective).



7 Introducing details

Once the composition and shot design is locked, I start to add details. When working in a studio, I usually do this step on the second day (the first day is used to generate many roughs as I can). At this stage, the thinking part of my brain can basically shut off. Now it's just muscle work. But you have to be patient, because adding those details can take a long time.



8 Material indication throughout the scene

In addition to my details, I take the time to indicate material and surface materials. In this case, there are three main materials on show: the shuttle (matte metallic), snow (semi-glossy) and rocks (matte with semi-gloss to indicate the presence of ice). I keep the rock surfaces mostly matte to so that they contrast with the shimmering snow surface, almost as if a thin layer of ice has built up on the snow. ➡➡



9 Adding complementary colours to the composition

I bring in a few complementary colours at this stage. The entire piece is looking too blue, so adding a bit of pink pulls the eye to the upper left, which will contrast nicely with the characters walking on the lower right. I keep this pink colour on a layer for almost an hour thinking it might not work (I usually don't work with layers except when adding strong elements, such as this pink colour).



10 Apply visual tricks to pull in the viewer

To help push the perspective and camera angle, I add in some cloud streams that follow the perspective grid. This will help guide the viewer's eye towards the wreck of the shuttle. It also grounds the camera by quickly enabling the viewer to see the composition's eye level – in essence, how high or low the camera is placed.



11 Additional value check

Now it's time for another black and white value check. If certain elements are too bright, I create a new layer and set it on Multiply. Then I use a dark blue colour to darken the areas that require contrast. Because shadows are mostly in the cool ranges of the colour wheel, using blue works most of the time. I also darken the bottom left and right corners to lock the viewer's eye into the main composition.



12 Adding scale

This is mostly an environmental shot, so my characters are a late addition. They don't play a major role in this piece, but are required for two reasons. First, it gives the painting a story element. Even though these characters are not clearly indicated, the viewer can still imagine a story taking place. Second, human-sized characters help add scale to the scene.



PRO SECRETS

Work loose

Don't stress out in the early stages of design. Let your imagination and hands flow. Don't worry about quality at this point. The key is to get the ideas down on paper and evolve the design in real time. The more loose and relaxed you are, the easier sometimes the ideas will flow. And let your instincts take over. Just flow across the canvas and find shapes naturally. Sometimes thinking or concentrating too much can make a design very stiff.

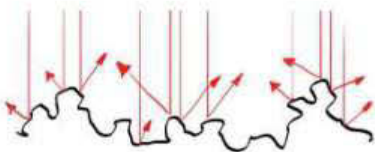
13 Place lens flare on a separate layer

I add lens flare for fun. This is kind of silly, but it's something a lot of next-generation games are doing. Things like lens flares, reflections and dirty lens were elements that film makers used to hide. Now, especially in games, those elements are brought to the fore. Thus, as concept designers trying to match the look of the final product, we're sometimes asked to introduce these elements. And they are fun to look at and very easy to add, but just put them on a layer – just in case!

MATTE SURFACE



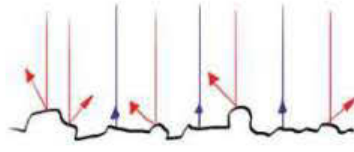
— LIGHT IS SCATTERED



50% GLOSS



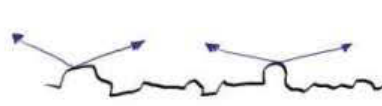
VIEWED STRAIGHT ON



90% GLOSS



VIEW IS TANGENT TO SURFACE



14 Understand reflections

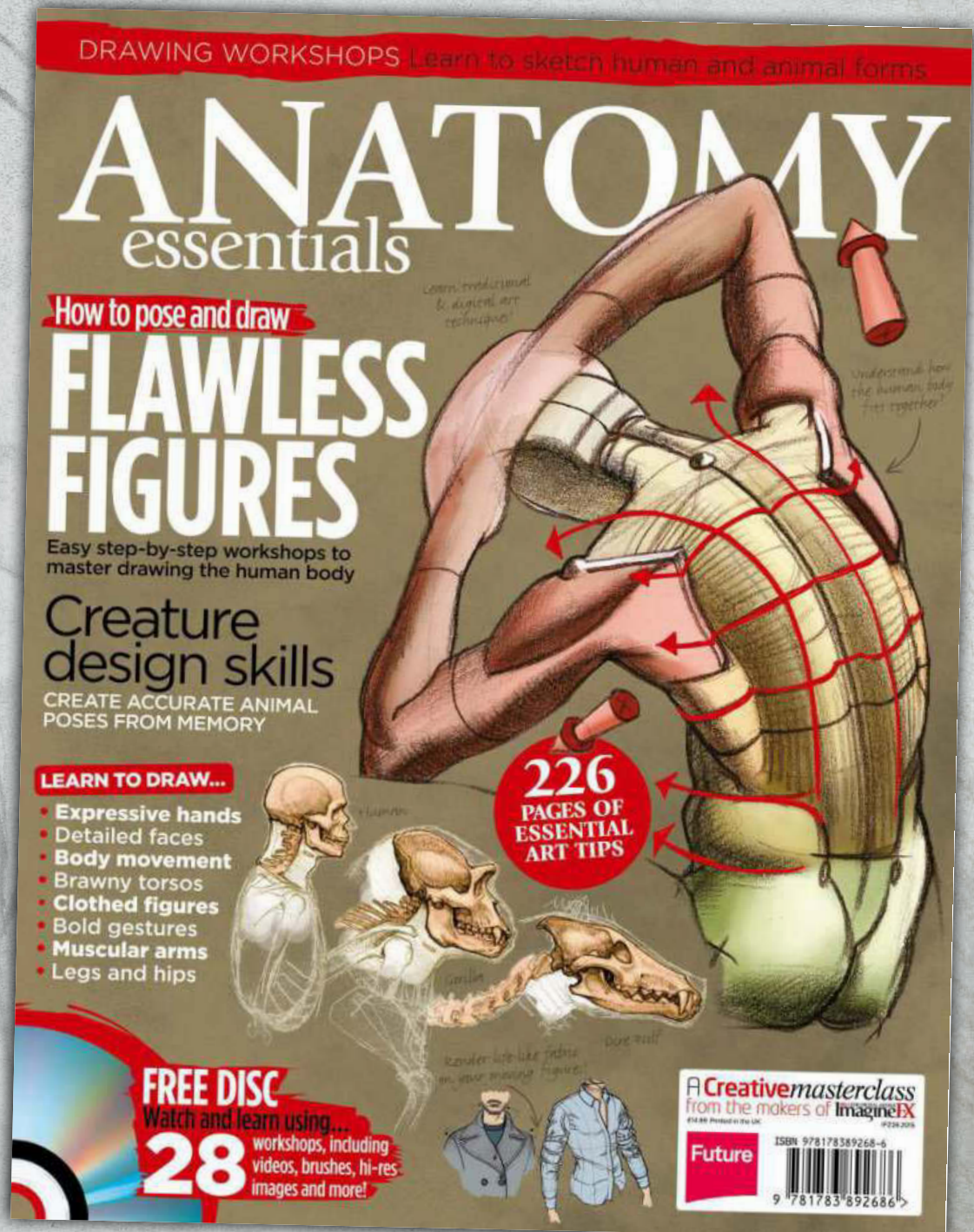
There's a lot of science behind reflections. However, here's a quick tip. As a surface becomes tangent to the viewer's eye angle, the surface becomes more reflective. This is true for both matte and reflective surfaces. You can test this yourself by looking at your studio table. If you stare straight down, the surface is most likely semi-matte. Now lower your eye until you're parallel to the surface. You should see the table become a lot more reflective. I mirror check the completed piece one last time, to ensure that I'm happy with the composition. I also use a bit of Color Balance to adjust and make the overall palette uniform. And then I call the painting finished! ●



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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



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ON TEST



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RATINGS EXPLAINED



Magnificent



Great



Good



Poor



Atrocious



Intuos Art



BEGINNER'S LUCK Wacom's popular entry-level tablet range has had a refresh – so how does the new Intuos Art shape up?

Price £75 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com

Moving from a mouse to working with a pen tablet is the biggest step you can take as a digital illustrator, so choosing the right tool for the job is crucial. The Intuos Draw is Wacom's new beginner offering, but the Intuos Art reviewed here targets users with 'more advanced artistic skills' by offering two tablet sizes (medium as well as small) and supporting touch gestures, and includes Corel Painter Essentials over ArtRage Lite software.

The simple design of the small tablet has definite advantages: it's thin and light enough to slide easily into any laptop bag and has two customisable

ExpressKey buttons on either side, making it fine for either left- or right-handed use. It's also well-sized for twinning with small laptop displays, but anything bigger than 15 inches and the active canvas area can begin to feel restrictive, especially for intricate, precision work.

The gestures, meanwhile, are a welcome addition: a single finger drag controls the mouse pointer as usual, but a tap-to-click, pinch-to-zoom or four-finger spread to reveal the desktop (for example) have the intuitive responsiveness of built-in Mac and Windows gestures.

The dots on the canvas area serve to orient your draw path and there's a

The medium-sized Art is recommended if you're working on a desktop screen.

convenient tag on the top of the tablet to stow your pen. A lock and touch-features switch are housed on the top along with a micro USB port for the conveniently L-shaped connector.

On the rear of the tablet are four rubber moulds that grip work surfaces well, and there's a flap that pops off to reveal port instructions, a battery compartment and wireless module slot (sold separately at a relatively pricey £35), and a cradle holding three spare nibs (together with a handy hole to detach the one in the pen).

The pen itself is battery-free, making it lighter, thinner and more streamlined than previous Wacom pens. Its rubber banding and matt body feel solid and

Two ExpressKeys on either side of the tablet can be customised to suit your needs.

The nibs are robust, but there are three spares supplied, in case of wear.

You can power the Art by cable, or use a wireless upgrade.

The Intuos Art comes in three colours and two sizes.

“The gestures are a welcome addition and have the intuitive responsiveness of built-in Mac and Windows gestures”

grippy, and the two customisable buttons are well-placed for average-sized fingers. There's no tilt sensitivity, but the 1,024 pressure levels match the previous generation of entry-level Wacom tablets and offer a decent range of brush control. There's also no discernible lag in use, and although the pen's dedicated eraser function has been ditched you can set an ExpressKey to Erase using the Wacom control panel, where you can also

modify pen pressure, button and gesture controls, and set them as global settings or only for specific apps.

The Intuos Art delivers on its aim to offer a realistic painting experience, but in an era of multi-touch mice and trackpads you may find the gestures surplus to requirements, making the Intuos Draw (£55) a cheaper alternative. And if you're illustrating on a big desktop screen, the medium-size Intuos Art (£150) is a smarter option.

DETAILS

Features

- Multi-Touch gestures
- Four programmable ExpressKeys
- 1,024 pressure-sensitivity levels
- Wireless support (sold separately)
- Three spare nibs
- Comes with Corel Painter Essentials

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7, 8 or 10, USB port, internet connection, CD/DVD-ROM drive
Mac: OS X 10.8.5 or later, USB port, internet connection, CD/DVD-ROM drive

Rating



IN FOCUS

TAKE THREE TABLETS...

Not keen on the Intuos Art? Then consider these three alternatives

Trust Flex Ultra-Thin

Web www.trust.com

Price £37



The latest Flex model is an inexpensive introduction for any

beginner. Its paper-thin design is flexible and compact, and has an effective anti-skid bottom to prevent travel when you draw. The pen offers 1,024-step pressure sensitivity and is comfortable to hold, but using the three buttons requires a certain grip in order not to feel awkward. Comes with Trust's intuitive Artweaver software.

Huion H610 Pro

Web www.huiontablet.com

Price £64



The Huion H610 Pro's price point undercuts the entry-

level Intuos range, but has a more plasticky feel for it. Eight Express keys sit along the left-hand side of a 10x6-inch active drawing area that has double the pressure sensitivity of the Intuos, but you do seem to have to press harder to get thicker brush strokes compared to Wacom tablets.

Wacom Intuos Pro

Web www.wacom.com

Price £199



The wireless Pro model has double the resolution and twice the

pressure sensitivity of the Intuos range, translating to finer control at higher screen resolutions. The Pro can recognise the tilt angle of the pen, offering a more naturalistic stroke, while its Precision mode momentarily lowers sensitivity, making applying detail or drawing fine lines that much easier.

INS
CG ART

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Tayasui's nine-tool palette retracts when not in use, resulting in a larger, cleaner workspace.



Sketches

iPad

PAPER KILLER? This could be the top choice for painting on the go...

Price Free (in-app purchases)

Company Tayasui

Web www.tayasui.com

RATING

Paper has cornered the market in freeform iPad drawing tools, but Tayasui Sketches is the first app to challenge its status. It offers a minimalist interface and a range of similar drawing tools, but it works in a slightly different way.

The nine-tool palette sits on the left of the drawing paper and can be dragged in and out of landscape view, offering pens, brushes, a Fill tool and an Eraser. Double-tap any brush to adjust colour, opacity, size and Blending mode. A long press on the Color Picker slides out your options. The Fill tool offers dots, lines and patterns that fill shapes you trace, while the Pro edition (£3.99) brings text, more tips, an eyedropper and extra Blending modes.

Get to know its innovative set of gestures – two-finger left swipe for undo, right to redo, pinch to zoom, three-finger swipe for a new paper and so on – and there's nothing to impede your creativity. The tools work well, with the inconsistencies of real pens and brushes.

The only downside that we can identify is the app's poor canvas organisation, which is where Paper pulls ahead. Otherwise Tayasui is a fine, feature-packed alternative.



Support for layers – as Tayasui has – is now a standard requirement for serious painting apps.



The simple design of the stand and bezel means this monitor encourages you to concentrate on your work.

31MU97 monitor

MAC & PC

SCREEN TIME LG's Digital Cinema 4k monitor has eight million-plus pixels. That might sound appealing, but does it really suit your needs?

Price £850 **Company** LG **Web** www.lg.com

With a decent amount of vertical tilt and height adjustment, the first thing you'll notice about the LG 31MU97 is that you'll absolutely be able to get it into a position to suit your work setup. It's an unassuming design, but that reflects its positioning as a professional piece of hardware, rather than a gimmicky, glitzy consumer toy.

Keep in mind that you could be looking at it for hours upon hours a day and the plainness becomes very appealing. Besides, the display itself is beautiful. If you're used to a standard widescreen monitor then this will look just slightly wider. And it is: the aspect ratio is an unusual 256:195 (pretty close to 17:9).

Before you go jumping on the 4k bandwagon, though, you need to weigh up whether the monitor meets your requirements or not. Sure, the

eight million-plus pixels might be lovely to paint with, but you might just find your input device doesn't quite suit. For such a high resolution you may need to invest in a larger graphics tablet, or you run the risk of inaccuracy. Menus and screen text can also be harder to read, and although you can scale them in the display settings, this misses the point.

The real benefit of this resolution comes when working with video and animation. The colour accuracy is superb, with 100 per cent sRGB and even 97 per cent of the digital cinema colour standard, meaning this isn't far from a true grading monitor. The benefit to working with timelines should be pretty obvious, with room for more time or detail, and if you work with keyframes or curves then you'll be very happy.

The quality of this display is fantastic. Just make sure it's suitable for your 2D work before splashing the cash.

DETAILS

Features

- True 4k
- 17:9 aspect ratio
- Portrait mode
- 4,096x2,160 resolution
- 2xHDMI
- DisplayPort
- Mini DisplayPort

System Requirements

PC & Mac: Check with the latest drivers for your GPU to see if it's compatible.

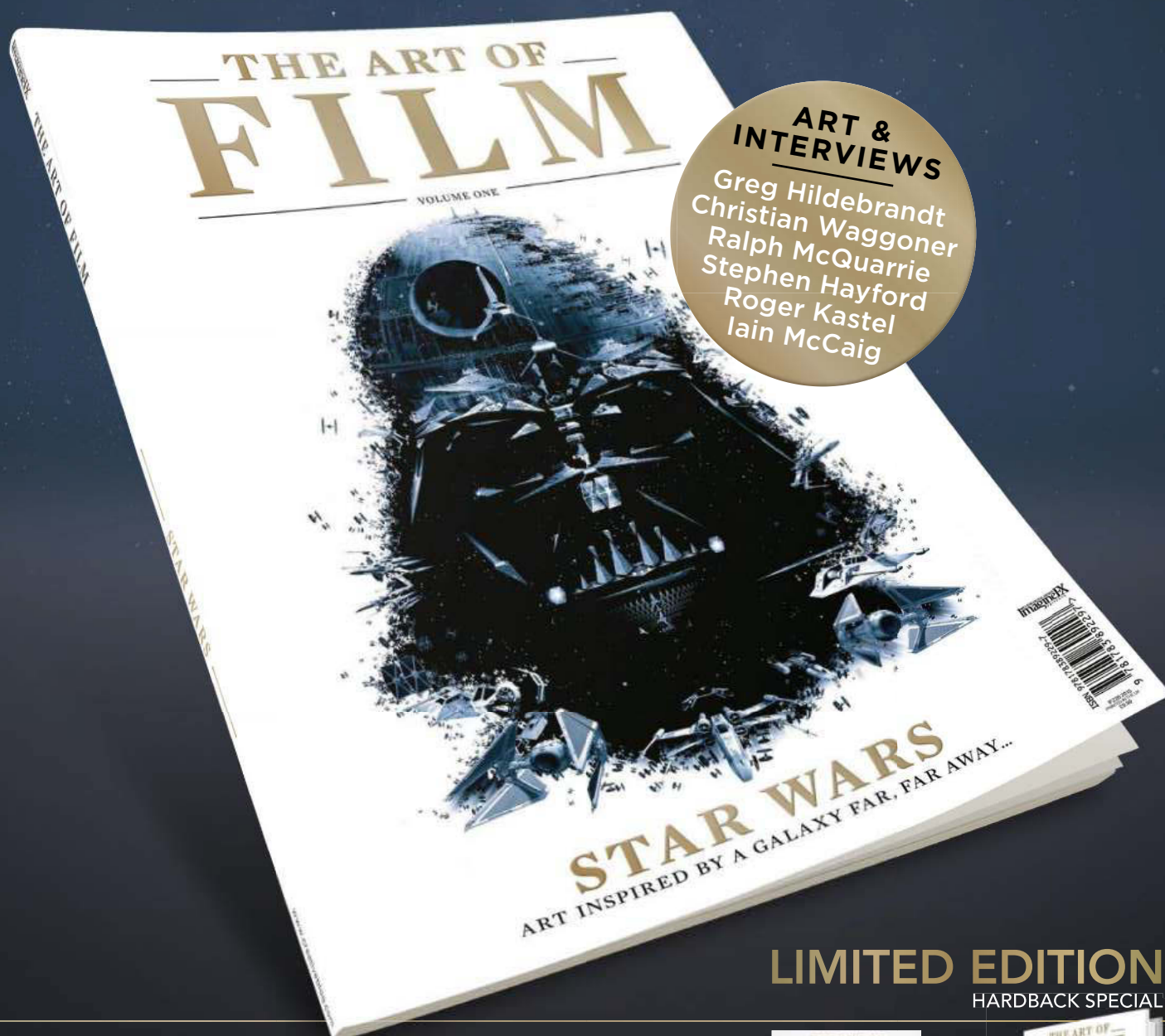
Rating

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Cameron Scott Davis' video reveals the concepts and techniques behind his Blood Eels of the Siren's Ossuary painting.

Cameron believes that working up the line art in pencil and scanning it in helps keep the final image from feeling digital.



Later in the video, Cameron turns his attention to detailing, - he's happy to experiment with new ideas constantly.



The central idea at the thumbnail stage is to find a visual symbol to give the composition extra power.



Illustration from Imagination

HIDDEN DEPTHS Artist and designer Cameron Scott Davis shows how one painting is generated by staying true to its central concept

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$49 **Format** Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

The painting looks simple, but Cameron Scott Davis' video shows it's anything but. This making of Blood Eels of the Siren's Ossuary is a wide-ranging, freewheeling talk covering concepts, composition, pencil line art, Photoshop painting and much more. The most critical topic under discussion, though - and the idea that sets this training video apart - is Cameron's approach to composition.

Much has been written about the technical aspects of composition, but insights into how the picture's underlying concept shapes the composition are harder to come by. Cameron explains how the swirls of a whirlpool inspire the arrangement of the scene's elements, lending extra weight to the central idea of a siren pulling her victims in. He makes it sound simple, but if you can embrace the principle of using composition as a symbolic device, it could potentially transform your work.



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Designing with thumbnails
- Conceptual composition
- Pencil drawing
- Digital clean-up
- Lighting the scene
- Detail and texture
- Establishing mood
- Visual storytelling

Length

144 minutes

Rating



The rest of the video is more traditional in its approach, but no less valuable. Cameron shows how he switches back and forth between paper and Photoshop, blowing up his chosen thumbnail and printing it out so he can render the drawing in pencil, then scan it back in. It sounds laborious, but he doesn't want the finished illustration feel too digital.

The closing stages, where Cameron presents a warts-and-all look at the decisions he took before changing his mind, will give comfort to anyone who believes professionals somehow produce perfect images effortlessly.

You'll also see how every decision Cameron makes (or un-makes) is informed by the concept, right up until the end. And learn an important lesson about knowing when to stop, as he reveals the things he'd do differently if he were starting the painting afresh.

It's a video that appears simple on first viewing, but, like the painting itself, reveals hidden depths. ●

ARTIST PROFILE CAMERON SCOTT DAVIS

Cameron is a designer and storyteller working in video games and animation. After character designing on titles including Guitar Hero and Tony Hawk, he joined DreamWorks Animation as a visual development artist, where he worked on The Croods, a Kung Fu Panda featurette, and other projects. He has written and illustrated a project called Sleepwalker. Cameron has taught



character design at the Gnomon School and been invited to speak at events around the world.

www.cdavisart.com



Structura 3: the art of Sparth

MASTER CHIEF Another Sparth book? Really? Is there enough in his new art tome to captivate his fans or inform digital artists?

Editor Teena Apeles **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £20 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available Now**

Art giants such as Sparth remind us there's still room to experiment, to change and grow as artists, in an industry overtly concerned with the zeitgeist. As Nicolas Bouvier's (his real name) colossal career rumbles to the outer edges of its second decade, *Structura 3* gives us a snapshot of three years of his work.

Three years! In that timespan there's more craft development, willingness to experiment and pursuit of ideas here than can be found by reading 300 blogs concerned with concept art. Work includes his concepts for 343 Industries' Halo franchise together with hyper-efficient, 30-minute personal paintings that transport the viewer to 'the idea' at warp speed. We also see



For pieces such as this Sparth talks the reader through his process in eight revealing stages.

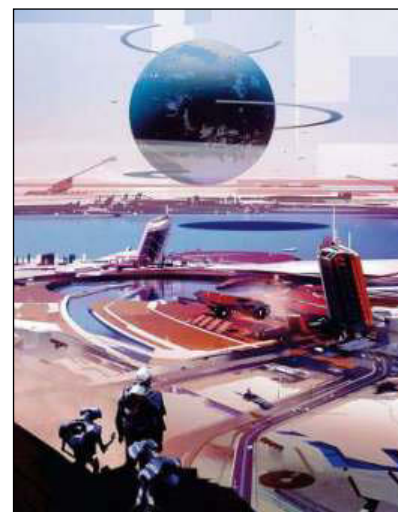


the artist in a state of transition, with a chapter dedicated to recent experimental and graphic pieces.

Here, Sparth pulls his geometric sensibilities to the fore, abandons textures and achieves value through the layering of flat, graduated shapes. The results are vectored landscapes of new and exotic virtual reality worlds. However, if you want to see those signature paintings of behemoth space-freighters departing landscapes dominated by monolithic structures, this book won't disappoint.

Another constant in all this change is superb storytelling. Each scene is being spectated by silhouetted figures. Often the characters in these paintings act as scale devices, but they also humanise the paintings making the extraordinary feel almost ordinary. Even when we become the sole viewer, Sparth still conveys a glimpsed moment. It's as if we've been distracted from our routine to look to the sky...

Structura 3 follows the large format of *Structura 2*, with over 160 pages of full-page artwork. This includes a back section of short practical tutorials (see left), with notes on processes and technique: it's 22 pages of indispensable insight. In fact, this section is such a gem that it feels a



In terms of Sparth's signature sci-fi structures and space-age art, his new book doesn't disappoint.

shame to relegate it to the rear of the book. Shorter tips would have been better served as mini boxouts punctuating each chapter, and the more in-depth tutorials could have bookended each chapter.

That quibble aside, *Structura 3* certainly delivers on inspiration, and has us looking to the horizon for *Structura 4*... and beyond.

RATING

Behind the Pixels

INSIDER INTEL Video game artist Mark Molnar's new art book is a treasure trove for anyone curious about the world of concept art

Author Mark Molnar **Publisher** Mark Molnar **Price** From £33 **Web** www.behindthepixels.net **Available** Now

To anyone new to the world of concept art, in a nutshell, get your hands on this book. If you're just starting out at art college, pester your lecturers to buy a copy today. There really is a ton of content here, in regular ImagineFX contributor Mark Molnar's treasured art book.

Not all of it is brand spanking new. A fair share of the art can be found online, but not necessarily for free, and regular ImagineFX readers may already be familiar with some of it.



Mark talks through how he created a video game magazine cover for Ninja Theory's upcoming Hellblade.



What this book does well, though, is not only show you the How, but fill in the Why gaps, crucially educating the reader on industry expectations, core skills and best practices. His art is, of course, very inspiring too.

In his introduction Mark talks about having to discover all of this for himself, which is why he felt compelled to author this book, and why he should be

commended for doing so. Indeed Behind the Pixels deserves to be on the bookshelves of art and design colleges everywhere. This way, young, curious minds can be exposed to a potential art career and use it as a vehicle to navigate the concept art landscape for the first time.

RATING

The Art of Hotel Transylvania 2

GORY DETAILS A behind-the-scenes look at this horrifyingly adorable blockbuster sequel that's superior to staple film-art books

Editor Brett Rector **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Movie tie-in books can be too easily dismissed. They have a history of being light on insight, with publishers throwing some concept art on the page, hastily dispatched to collectors keen to grow their mound of movie merchandise.

That's not what Titan Books do, though. The company has been evolving these books for decades now and The Art of Hotel Transylvania 2 follows a successful formula of getting right into the nitty-gritty of a film's



The book showcases plenty of sketches, concepts and film stills from the second stay at Hotel Transylvania.



production. Here we're treated to insights from both concept artists and production illustrators, animators and even director Genndy Tartakovsky – all presented with a design aesthetic evocative of the film's visual language.

The book reveals a collective of artists keen to see something a little different on our 3D animated screens. Indeed, Hotel Transylvania's quirky designs sit at the edge of a genre too often accused of being homogenised

in its output. The influences of early cartoons are prevalent throughout the talent involved and John Norton's nostalgic storyboards alongside both Craig Kellman and Joey Chou's paintings leave us wishing more chances would be taken with large animated movies. We reckon they could get away with it too. If it wasn't for those pesky kids...

RATING

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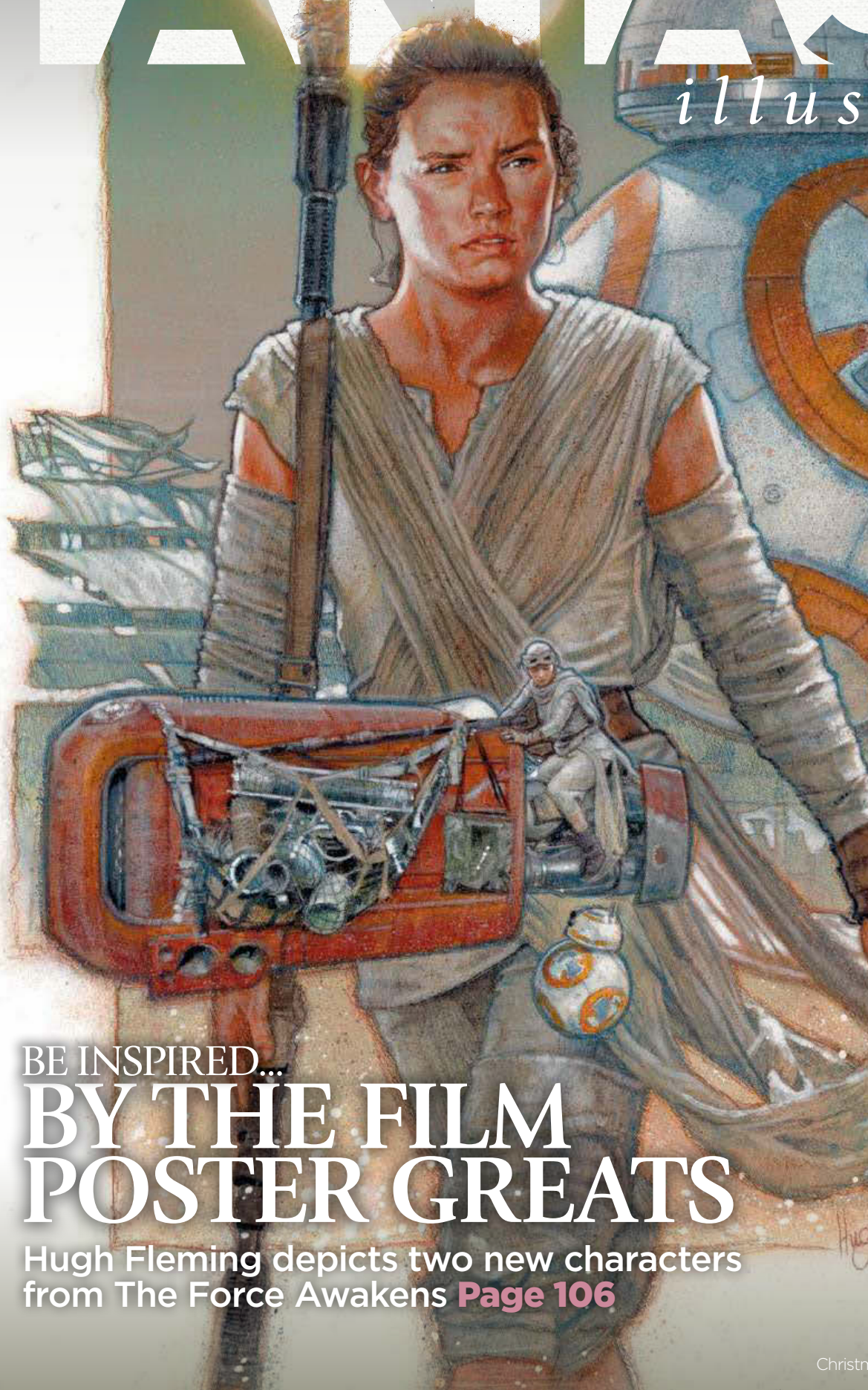


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BE INSPIRED...
**BY THE FILM
POSTER GREATS**

Hugh Fleming depicts two new characters
from The Force Awakens **Page 106**

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Dave Seeley talks libido.

FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

Mary Ancilla Martinez

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.maryancilla.com

EMAIL: mary@maryancilla.com

MEDIA: Oils



An Albuquerque native, Mary now works primarily in oil and paints out of Los Angeles. Her work, she says, "focuses on exploring the concept of humanity's capacity for growth and potential." The artist explains that her paintings are about human transformation and the role mankind plays in personal and group evolution of consciousness.

In addition to concepts, Mary loves the painting process. "The more I start to play with the edges of paint and get lost in the pure process of creating and destroying using knives and scraping tools, the more my paintings seem to take on a life of their own and become what they desire to be, despite my original intentions."

1 METAMORPHOSIS

Oil on wood panel, 24x36in

"The path of personal evolution, how we internally transform ourselves and our mental views and beliefs via life experiences, are represented by the flowers and petals in this painting."

2 MANGO

Oil on gesoboard, 11x14in

"Inspired from seeing Mango and Dango perform at an outdoor music festival called Lightning In a Bottle. Mango is an amazing clown who can do the splits on stilts all the way to the ground - and get all the way back up again!"

3 EL PROFETA

Oil on aluminium panel, 16x24in

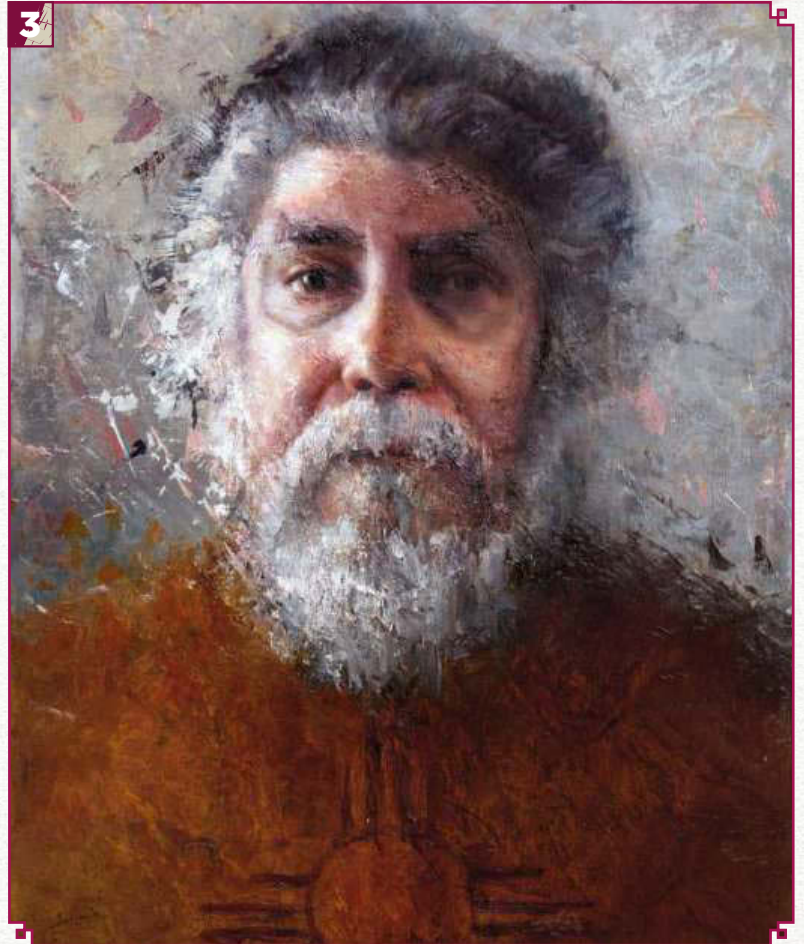
"This one started out as a portrait of my father, but morphed into something more universal along the way. I started to see the character as a prophet or seer. My father's family lived in New Mexico for over 400 years before I was born, so I choose to include the Zia Pueblo sun symbol into the painting."

4 WALLFLOWER

Oil on wood panel, 18x24in

"This is about a human being emerging from or retreating back into the privacy and sanctity of an ulterior existence, depending on how the viewer chooses to view the painting. As she prepares to enter into society, her physical form and clothing materialise into reality. And as she retreats into the wall, her clothing and form dissipate."





Stephanie Law

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.shadowscapes.com

EMAIL: stephlaw@gmail.com

MEDIA: Watercolour, ink, gold leaf



Stephanie's work is an exploration of mythology mixed with personal symbolism. Her art journeys through surreal worlds populated by dreamlike figures, masked creatures and winged shadows. Her fantastical universe permeates through her visions, giving a sense that this is a world that underlies our own, revealing itself "when potential and desire become actuality, and when patterns reveal their beauty," she says.

Archetypes, the basis for the universal appeal of mythological concepts, are one of the defining inspirations for her imagery, along with her love of dance. Having been a dancer for almost two decades, Stephanie uses that experience of how the human body moves and emotes to create movement in her artwork.



1 STAG SONATA CYCLE: ALLEGRO

Watercolour, ink, gold leaf, 14x8in

"The white stag is a guide. He chooses who is allowed to see him, and with that glimpse, invites the viewer to accompany him on a seeking journey. I did a series of stag pieces, each with a musical motif for its title and theme. This one is about the quickening pace."

2 INNER WORKINGS

Watercolour, 15x19in

"The strange and beautiful tie of the rules of mathematics and physics, to the organic wonder and growth of life and nature. The contrast of these opposing forces and their interactions were what I wanted to explore."

3 HER SORROWS AND HER JOYS

Watercolour, watercolour ground, gold leaf, 16x20in

"Ladybugs (also known by other names like ladybird and ladybeetle) were named for the Virgin Mary. Their seven spots were said to symbolise her seven sorrows and seven joys. But so much other lore is associated with ladybugs - luck, bountiful crops, fair weather, and the driving away of sadness."

4 DREAMSIGN

Watercolour, ink, gold leaf, 14x14in

"A dreamsign is the elusive anomaly that a dreamer can learn to use to gain lucidity. It's a moment when clarity pierces the fog. Ironically, it's often in the form of the nonsensical and out-of-place. Suddenly the fabrications of the mind become apparent as such."

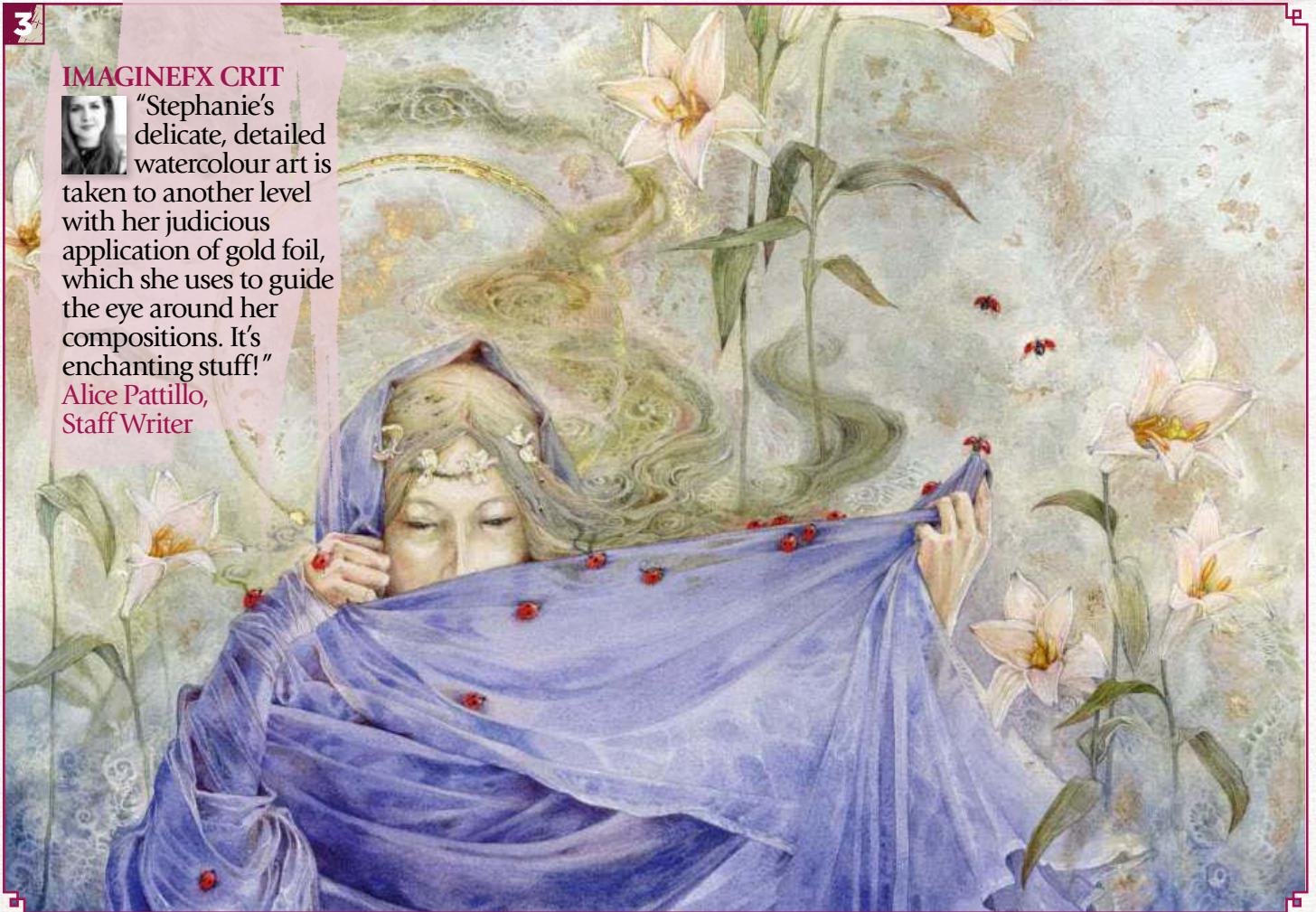
3

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Stephanie's delicate, detailed watercolour art is taken to another level with her judicious application of gold foil, which she uses to guide the eye around her compositions. It's enchanting stuff!"

Alice Pattillo,
Staff Writer



4



SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to seven pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

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All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

Pencil Oils

PAINT AN EPIC STAR WARS LINE-UP

Discover how TSUYOSHI NAGANO composed a
saga-spanning collection of key Star Wars characters

COLOURS IN SPACE

I painted the stardust by mixing oil paint solvents, creating irregularities. I added red and pink and used black for the finishing touches, then introduced red, white and other coloured stars with an airbrush.

ROBOT DETAILS

The detailed parts of C-3PO and R2-D2, the portions that have lines or outlines, are purposely left over from the rough sketch that I made using a mechanical pencil.

SITH LORDS

Darth Vader blended in with the background, so I made the reflected light red. So his helmet didn't stand out, I added yellow and blended it into Darth Sidious, which also shows a relationship between the two.

Artist insight An epic line-up

This painting was created for the Japanese edition of *Star Wars: The New Essential Chronology*. The drawing is divided into two parts for the covers of volumes one and two. When you line them up, you can see the whole painting, so it stands out in book stores.

Using character arrangement sketches from editor Junzō Takagi, I created the composition, colour scheme and poses. To create symmetry on the left and right, I instilled a sense of grandness and intensity. Most important was the direction in which the main characters

are facing. From the middle to the end on the left and right, the characters are set to stagger and face the exterior of the painting to give a sense of distance. Anakin and Luke are facing in opposite directions, which helps provide balance.

The placement of Darth Vader was tricky, but I eventually put him facing down at an angle, beneath Darth Sidious, for contrast. This also gave a sense of distance from the six main characters.



Tsuyoshi is well known among Star Wars fans for his many Japanese spin-off book covers.
<http://ifxm.ag/t-nagano>

TROOPING IN TIME

This was Junzō Takagi's idea. Here I show the flow of time from Jango Fett, through the clone troopers of Episodes II and III, with the stormtrooper of Episode IV, all mirrored by the presence of Boba Fett.

DEPICTING MARA

I like Mara Jade a lot, so my drawings of her tend to be full body. Her costume was created using the comics as a reference. The lightsaber faces the lower right, for balance.

COLOUR BALANCE

Grand Admiral Thrawn's skin and Mara Jade's lightsaber match, while Qui-Gon Jinn and Yoda's lightsabers are the same green, to keep the painting engaging.

ALIEN ART

It was difficult to make the Yuuzhan Vong look realistic because there were no photographic materials. So I referred back to horror and creature films as I drew him.



Workshops



GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Pencil

Oils

Acrylics

BE INSPIRED BY THE FILM POSTER GREATS

Inspired by the work of classic film poster artists, **HUGH FLEMING** paints two new desert-dwelling characters from The Force Awakens

For this workshop I'll be taking you through the process of illustrating Rey and BB-8 from Star Wars Episode VII.

As a great movie buff and long-time fan of the great poster artists Drew Struzan and the late Richard Amsel, this is an ideal assignment for me. Like those two illustrators I'm a portrait artist at heart, and movie characters are the thing I love to paint the most. And, of course, I'm mad keen on Star Wars!

I know very little about how Rey and BB-8 are related within the narrative of The Force Awakens, but judging from the promotional materials released so far I'm confident their pairing in a montage will be appropriate. I like the flexibility that

ARTIST INSIGHT

ACCENTUATE REALITY

Render bright white highlights thicker than they may appear in real life. Doing this will enhance the living quality of a wet eye or the sparkle of chrome.

montage affords. Elements can be juxtaposed in a figurative manner to convey a relationship between characters or get a sense of a world. You can have fun with a design without having to reconcile disparate lighting conditions of reference shots, or manage tricky perspective.

One challenge here is to fashion a relatively singular composition from limited reference materials, while also trying to preempt choices likely to be made by other eager fan artists keen to express their enthusiasm for the new movie. My painting needs to stand out from the crowd.

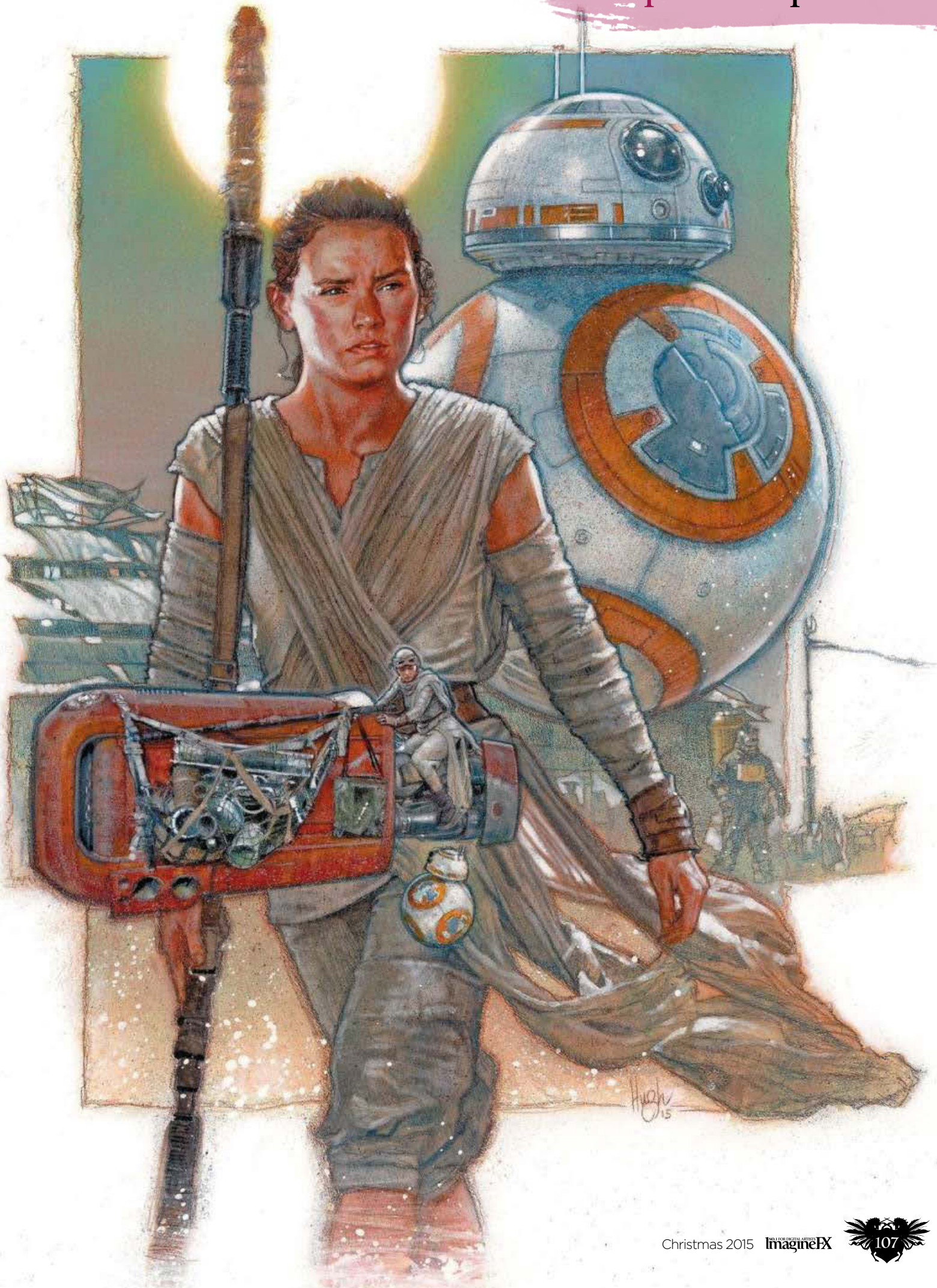
I also find it's useful to combine reference into new combinations to keep things fresh. Rey's head, for example, will

be swapped out with another of superior resolution to create a unique pose.

I'm essentially self-taught and have had only minimal formal training as an illustrator. Consequently, I've lent on my intuition far more than I probably should have, and my technique has now settled into a perpetual argument between pencil and acrylics – each medium contradicting and correcting the mistakes of the other until a balance is achieved.



Hugh is an Australian artist whose Star Wars credits include covers for Dark Horse Comics and illustrations for the Star Wars Insider magazine, where his popular Star Wars Rock Band art first appeared. Follow him on Twitter: @shuggyMF.



MATERIALS

PENCILS

■ Prismacolor: Warm, Grey 90 per cent, Cool Grey 10 per cent, French Grey 10 per cent, White, Peacock Blue, Deco Aqua, Light Aqua, Mediterranean Blue, Dark Umber, Pumpkin Orange, Deco Yellow, Salmon Pink, Poppy Red, Raspberry

PAINTS:

■ NAM Gesso Primer
■ Derivan Matisse
Acrylics: Payne's Grey, Vermillion, Skin Tone Mid, Cobalt Teal, Cobalt Turquoise, Yellow Deep, Titanium White
■ Liquitex Heavy Body Acrylics: Unbleached Titanium, Brilliant Orange, Cadmium Orange Hue

SURFACES

■ Crescent 310 Cold Press
■ Tracing paper

BRUSHES

■ Airbrush: Paasche 60mm heavy medium flat brush
■ NAM Ruby Red round Synthetic #4
■ NAM 7010 synthetic 9mm flat brush
■ NAM 7000 synthetic



1 Designing in digital

After compiling internet reference materials I design the montage in black and white. The main focal point will be the character's face, with the lines of Rey's costume pulling the eye downward, toward the vignette with the speeder vehicle and out to the base of the design.



3 Rendering a surface texture

I apply undiluted Gesso primer with a wide brush to Crescent illustration board. The gesso texture will become more prominent as paint and pencils are progressively laid down on to the board.



5 Applying mid-range values with acrylic wash

Now I apply diluted Payne's Grey to fill out the mid-values. Then, to suggest the grit and dust of a desert environment, I use a toothbrush to create a spattering of Payne's Grey and White ink.



2 Determining a colour palette

I use Corel Painter to tint the monochrome design and devise a blue/orange complementary palette, taking cues from the prominent orange of BB-8's markings and the blue sky of Jakku, the new desert planet in the film.



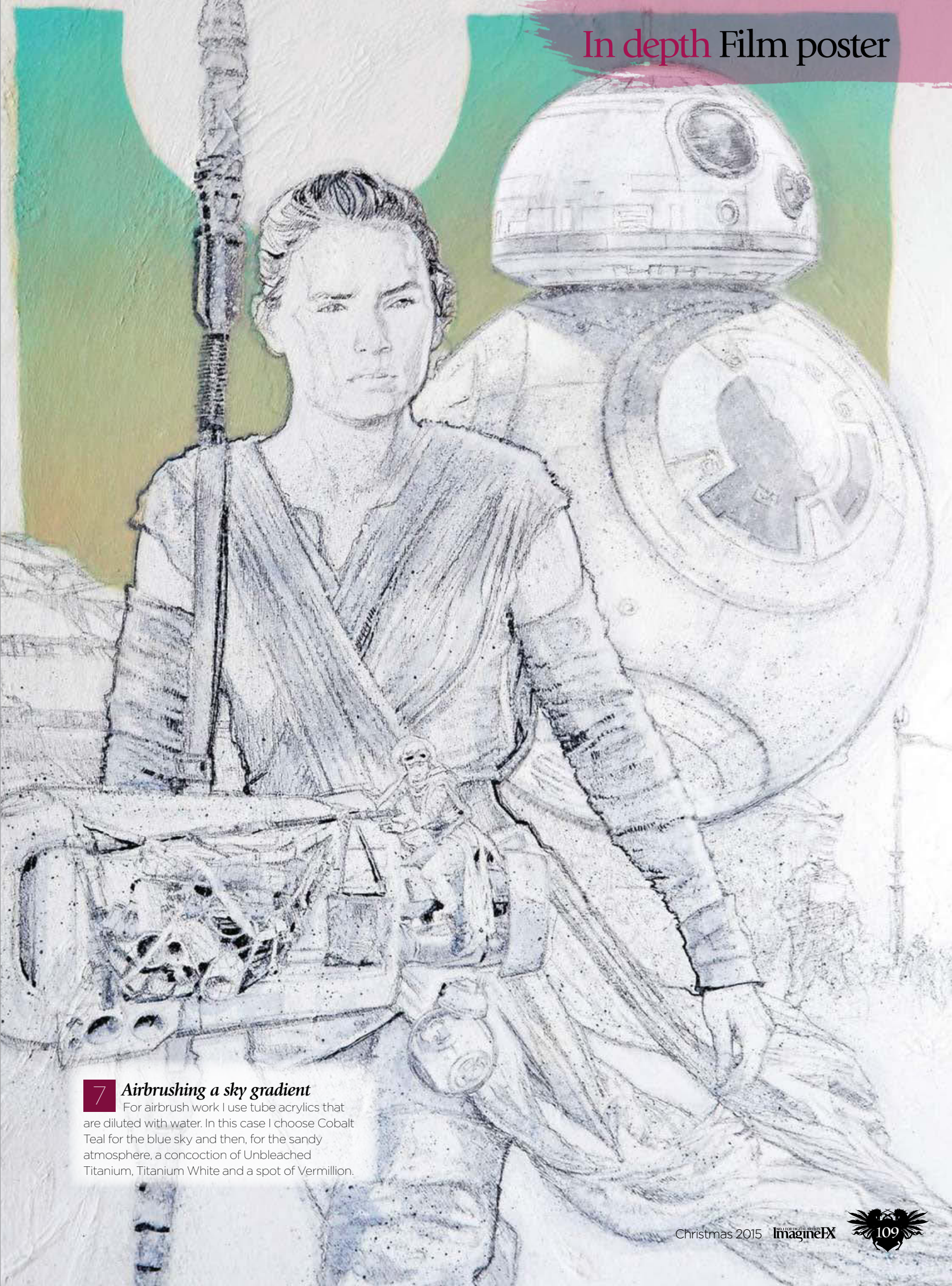
4 Develop the underdrawing

I loosely draft the design on to the surface using an opaque projector. I then render the darkest values in Warm Grey Prismacolor, striving for fidelity to the reference material. These shadow details will anchor the picture and keep important structures from drifting too much.



6 Making an airbrush mask

I spray tracing paper with adhesive and leave it to dry until it's tacky to the touch. Then I affix it to the artwork and use a hobby knife to cut a mask for the sky.



7 Airbrushing a sky gradient

For airbrush work I use tube acrylics that are diluted with water. In this case I choose Cobalt Teal for the blue sky and then, for the sandy atmosphere, a concoction of Unbleached Titanium, Titanium White and a spot of Vermillion.



8 Airbrushing Rey's skin

Rey's base skin tone is a combination of Vermillion and Skin Tone Mid. I favour washes when applying colour over the initial drawing, but here I use the airbrush to avoid dark pencils bleeding into the wash and muddying the colour.



9 Adding the tints

The blue/daylight temperature informs the choice of Cool Grey for the lighter tones of Rey's skin. I bolster the opacity with acrylic, mixed from Teal, Vermillion and White. If I spot too much contrast creeping in, I flatten it back with another wash. Then I apply bright white gesso highlights.



10 Moving around the painting

I migrate to other areas, duplicating the process: colour is applied in washes, details then tightened with pencil, contrast is modulated with washes and tints are gradually worked up in thicker acrylics and finished in gesso where they are brightest.



COMP TIP

DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE MONTAGE

Strive for simplicity: establish a hierarchy and find lines to draw the eye through the composition.

ARTIST INSIGHT

ALTER YOUR VIEWPOINT

Work with the illustration in different orientations. You'll interpret the shapes that you're trying to replicate with a greater degree of objectivity.



11 Revising my art

I return to previously worked sections with fresh eyes, taking particular care in finessing Rey's likeness. Her face will be the focal point for the design and so I spend more time here than anywhere else in the painting.





12 *Rendering the background*

I'm unhappy with the sky colour so I respray it using a lightened teal and reapply the haze gradient with the toothbrush. Next I sketch shadow detail in with a Peacock Blue prisma. I avoid dark shadows because the sun would prevent such values from showing through here.



13 *Painting the harsh Jakku sun*

The airbrush is the ideal tool to simulate the outer glow of the sun. Gesso describes the sun's hot centre and is diluted where necessary to create a soft transition from yellow to white. I airbrush titanium white and yellow Prismacolor to complete the effect.



14 *Final polish*

With the piece nearly complete I tidy things up and make corrections. I tighten the shadows with Dark Umber pencil, and white highlights are gessoed for optimal brightness to make eyes shine and hard surfaces gleam. Then I add highlights on Rey's hair and staff, while more spattering with the toothbrush helps to simulate dust.



15 *Sealing the surface*

I finish keylines and borders in Prismacolor, sign the painting and spray with several coats of workable matte fixative in case any more corrections are needed.

PAINT TIP

PENCIL OVER AIRBRUSHED COLOUR
Mix paints from the tube – agents in liquid pigments can make paints too shiny to draw over.

ARTIST INSIGHT

GLOW WITH CONFIDENCE

To render glowing light effects convincingly, observe how the glow infringes on foreground objects and how lighter values underneath will remain visible as darker ones disappear.

Pencil

REFINING YOUR CREATURE DESIGN

BRYNN METHENEY has used real animal reference to combine characteristics to create a new creature. Now she refines her ideas to find a fun and unique design

Part of creature design involves refining it into something unique. Sometimes, just adding shapes to a silhouette can make the design more exciting. The plain shapes break up the overall design and creates spaces for filling in with more characteristics.

Using vellum or tracing paper enables me to work on top of my design so I don't lose my original drawing as I develop my animal. In this article I'll be looking to creatures like armadillos and newts, but

you should also consider prehistoric animals such as the platybelodon and other extinct proboscideans.

I use the Col-Erase with a regular pencil to seal in the design. I'm using a Blackwing pencil because the heavy lead enables me to solidify details over top of the Col-Erase. Once I like a design I can even use another sheet of vellum as a clean sheet to strengthen the design. It's also a good idea to pull from groups of animals that aren't related. For example, I can reference animals that are outside of

MATERIALS

- Violet Col-Erase
- Pencil
- Blackwing 602 Pencil
- Staedtler rubber eraser
- Cotton Fiber Design vellum paper

mammalian anatomy, even though my creature has a more mammalian form. This is especially true for colour.

My final lesson will cover posing, colour and specific details about my creature. For now, I want to push the silhouette and have a strong surface anatomy.



Brynn specialises in creature design, fantasy illustration and visual development for film, games and publishing. She lives and works in Oakland, California.

www.brynnart.com

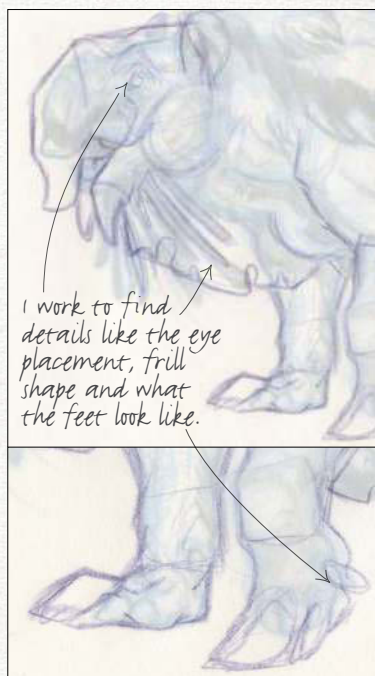
shapes like squares and boxes are associated with power and stability, while rounded shapes are friendly. Pointed shapes are more sinister.



Keeping the overall shape of your creature in mind will help you convey the kind of creature or character you're dealing with.

1 Try out different shapes for your creature

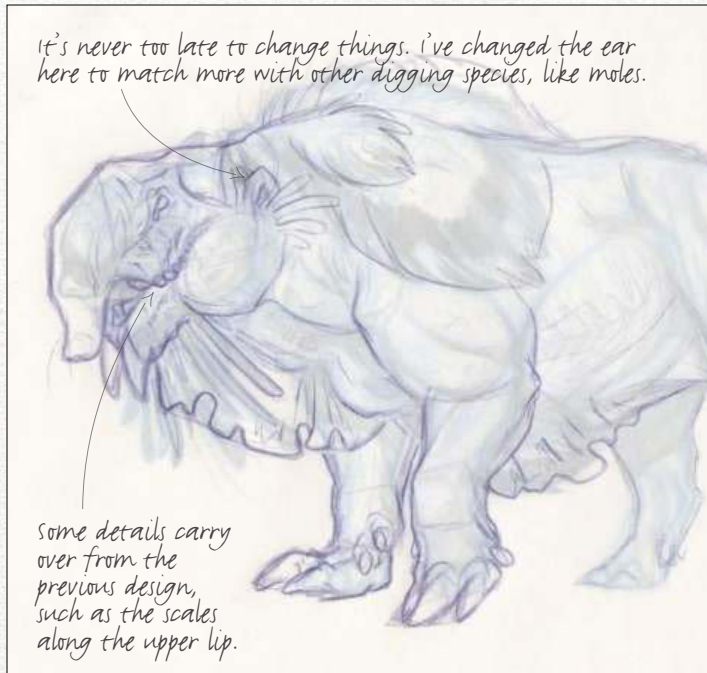
I lay vellum or tracing paper over my original drawing and just have some fun lightly sketching in shapes over the silhouette. I keep the new shapes light so I can build up my creature. In this example I'm pulling from ancient elephants in the face and newts in the neck dewlap. So while I'm combining basic shapes, I'm also using general shapes from real-life reference.



I work to find details like the eye placement, frill shape and what the feet look like.

2 Find the details

Now that I've got some shapes laid in for general design, I can begin to find details. The overall movement of the initial shape can help inform where the eyes might be or where the ears might have moved to. I'm able to change the overall identity and character of this creature just by moving features around a bit.



3 Solidify the details

Now I can start to pull from the reference more. I'm looking to armadillos for the feet and claws, making the creature feel like more of a digger/forager. Always think about the function of your creature as you go. I want to make an interesting silhouette but I also want to make something that has a reason for looking the way it does.

4 Go in with graphite

Now that I've reimagined my creature, I can start to find the details and volumes of the creature. Blackwing pencils are soft so it won't take long to build up the drawing. I've laid over another piece of vellum on top of my Col-Erase sketch so I can keep these layers separate. This means I have all of my work saved, and won't lose any layers.



ARTIST INSIGHT USING TAPE

Tape your drawings down as you build up layers. This helps to keep drawings still, and reduces smudging and the layers becoming unruly as you add more. Use either masking tape or scotch tape because they won't stick to the vellum layer too much.

PENCILS AVOID SMUDGING

Lay another piece of vellum down over your drawing for your hand to rest on so you don't spread graphite around.

5 Now, try taking another visual direction!

Don't stop at one attempt; try a few different ways to see your creature. It's exciting and fun to make the effort to push your design in opposite directions. When you start to explore options with your designs, you can arrive in a place that you might not have thought of before. It's important to remember that concepts like this are never set in stone and shouldn't be treated as precious. Keep exploring your designs!

First Impressions

Dave Seeley

The artist known for his dramatic Star Wars art talks influences and more



Where did you grow up, and when did you realise you had a talent for art?

I grew up in the Boston suburbs. I used to have

kids hanging over my shoulder when I made coloured pencil drawings of monsters at elementary school recess. That's my earliest memory of understanding I was good at it.

Did your upbringing influence your style of painting?

That's a given, though I think of my style as flexible depending on the piece I'm working on. I love a relatively wide range of styles as a consumer of art. Nowadays, I'm using photo collage to work up images, and I'll take that to a high degree of finish before choosing the stylistic finish of any given piece. That allows me a range from fully photographic to what I'd consider relatively painterly.

How did science fiction and fantasy art get on to your radar?

I watched early black and white horror and sci-fi films as a kid. I read Tarzan series and Stephen King books as a teen, and the 1977 release of Star Wars made a deep impression. I copied from Frazetta and Boris art books. I had lots of comic



STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER

Done as a print for Star Wars Celebration IV, but used for the novel Luke Skywalker and the Shadows of Mindor.

books, but ultimately felt like superheroes were wearing silly outfits. It was probably Heavy Metal magazine that sold me sci-fi and fantasy by simultaneously tickling my libido.

Have you enjoyed exploring the Star Wars universe through your art?

Absolutely! It's been a kick to contribute to the world building and to design new

“Heavy Metal magazine sold me sci-fi and fantasy by tickling my libido”

aspects of it. I also lived the prequels through the eyes of my then-young son, so it was a great father-son bonding experience, and it helped me see the Star Wars universe from an innocent, “born-again” perspective.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Any low points?

I just had The Art of Dave Seeley published by Insight Editions. Insight does amazing quality books, and I was introduced to the company by Lucasfilm when it was doing collector edition

Star Wars books about a decade ago. That seems like a huge milestone. Low points all occurred while doing my income taxes in the early years, and realising that my wife was subsidising my shift from architecture to illustration.

To date, what would you say has been your most challenging commission or assignment?

I did an advertising commission several years ago, where it was a series of real-life heroes in police and military action scenes. It was three weeks of very little sleep, and generating many images that were rejected before getting to the yes stage. Still, that was a satisfying experience, having met the challenge and working on great subjects.

If I interpret your question differently, then the most challenging task for me is if I take on a commission that I have no inherent interest in. Then it's battling my lack of attention span. That's a challenge... but perhaps I have blocked out those specific memories!

Are you constantly refining your painting process?

It's absolutely a constant evolution, although when laying the oil paint down, I slip into a reptile-brain state that's more about the beauty of mark making. Overthinking can inhibit that.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I think I'd be careful about being too honest, as it might have put me off entirely, and ultimately, I'm glad to be me. I think the best advice for any illustrator looking to find ideal commissions is to assign yourself your dream job, execute it, and market the hell out of it. The work you do begets the work you'll be offered. That seems obvious, but it took me a long time to understand it. You can't expect clients to look at something very different from what they want, and understand that you could do what they are after.

How would you sum up your work, in under 10 words?

Engaging, intense, gritty, sexy, nuanced, heroic, epic, spatial and atmospheric.

Dave's painted for the publishing, film and video, and advertising industries. You can see more of his work at www.daveseeley.com.

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